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Discover Felley Priory's golden daffodil displays

21

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editor's letter

Spring is the season of new beginnings: fresh growth, gently unfurling leaves and the swelling of flower buds engender feelings of optimism about the gardening year ahead. The sunny yellow of daffodils is the perfect herald of spring and the historic narcissus orchard at Felley Priory in Nottinghamshire is truly exceptional. Head gardener Lindsey Ellis continues the garden's development by ensuring she chooses daffodils that lend themselves to naturalising and shares her favourites on page 38. This issue sees the start of our latest pots of style series. Written and styled by Thomas Unterdorfer, head gardener at Rockcliffe, a private garden in the Cotswolds, the five-part series (which will continue in the May, July, September and November issues), provides a step-by-step guide to creating beautifully planted containers. Tracking down easy, trouble-free plants that are guaranteed to look good as and when required, will help you improve your garden. Nurseryman Tom Attwood, who gardens in the unforgiving climate of Cumbria, shares his favourite, fail-safe plants with us on page 58. Finally, I wanted to let you know that this month also marks a new beginning for me and for *Gardens Illustrated*. After 15 years on the magazine, I'm stepping down as editor, but I'm delighted to be handing over the reins to the very talented Lucy Bellamy, who takes over in May. I wish her and the team great success and look forward to following the magazine's continued evolution. Hope you enjoy this issue.

Juliet

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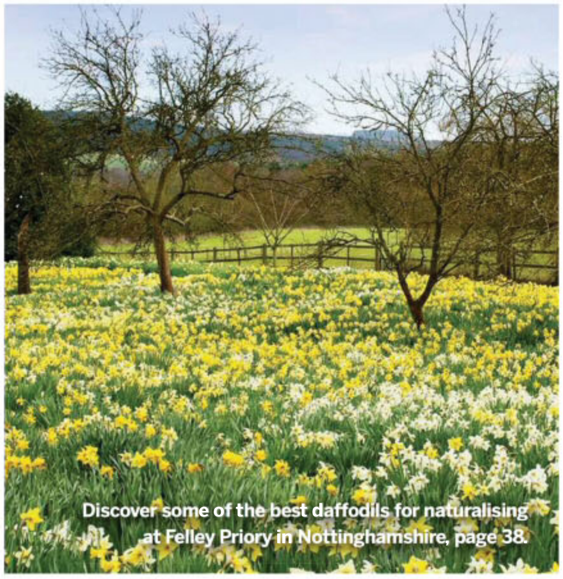

Discover some of the best daffodils for naturalising at Felley Priory in Nottinghamshire, page 38.

Take inspiration for fabulous container displays in the first of our five-part series, page 46.

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RICHARD BLOOM / GAP PHOTOS, ANDREW MONTGOMERY

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ANDREW MONTGOMERY; RICHARD BLOOM / GAP PHOTOS

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Grower of the Year Awards 2011 Winner Grower of the Year Ornamental

Grower of the Year Awards 2015 Winner Grower of the Year Ornamental

contributors

ANDREW MONTGOMERY

THOMAS UNTERDORFER

Thomas is head gardener at Rockcliffe, Gloucestershire. Having trained in Vienna and at Kew, he has worked in many private gardens. On page 46 he begins a new series on container planting (and you can see some of his handiwork on page 81).

"I love combining plants in containers to create schemes that fit their individual characters and enhance the space they are in."

MODESTE HERWIG

Modeste is a garden designer and photographer who started taking pictures at the age of 15. She worked in her father's garden for eight years, and has produced 40 books and countless articles on gardening. She turns her lens on Raoul Hagenbeek's garden on page 52.

"Raoul and I have similar taste. I love his use of robust materials and strong lines with detailed planting and multi-stemmed trees."

ANDREW MONTGOMERY /COURTESY PHAIDON PRESS.

AARON BERTELSEN

Originally from New Zealand, Aaron trained at Kew and worked at the Jerusalem Botanical Gardens. He joined Great Dixter in 1996 as a student and became the vegetable gardener and cook in 2007. Read an extract from *The Great Dixter Cookbook* on page 68.

"It's been an honour to celebrate Great Dixter's tradition of growing and cooking seasonal produce through this new book."

TOM ATTWOOD

Tom trained at Kew before gardening in the north of England where he grows hardy perennials with his wife Abi. His nursery garden is a space to celebrate a lifestyle fuelled by a healthy addiction to plants. On page 58 he profiles the best hardy plants for great borders.

"I'm in awe of so many hardy plants and relish every opportunity to use with them in my work."

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5 June 2017

The Great Dixter Cookbook

Plot to plate in the kitchen garden

Join Aaron Bertelsen, Great Dixter's gardener-cook to discover the secrets of a successful plot that provides ample ingredients for the kitchen

THE SPEAKER
Aaron Bertelsen grew up in New Zealand, where he helped his grandfather to grow vegetables. He went on to train at Kew and now works as Great Dixter's kitchen gardener and cook.

Back in 2001, the late Christopher Lloyd – gardener, writer and owner of Great Dixter – published *Gardener Cook* bringing together his two passions and revealing his commitment to using simple ingredients and fresh, seasonal produce. Now, Aaron Bertelsen, Great Dixter's current gardener-cook has collated a selection of recipes and growing advice in a new book *The Great Dixter Cookbook* (published by Phaidon) that brings the Dixter tradition of flavourful, fresh food to the fore once again (see our book extract on page 68).

To celebrate the book's publication, we invite readers to join Aaron for a reader day at Great Dixter to learn more about creating and maintaining a plot full of seasonal fruit and veg. There will be tips on cultivar choice and cultivation through the year along with ideas on how to create delicious meals using your fresh produce. Plus Aaron will serve you a home-cooked lunch. You'll also have the opportunity to tour the gardens and buy plants from the nursery at a 10 per cent discount. *The Great Dixter Cookbook* will also be available for sale.

Tickets cost £85
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Tickets and directions will be sent out prior to the event. Places are limited so booking is essential. Please advise us of any dietary requirements or accessibility queries when booking. †Calls to this number from a BT landline will cost 13p per minute plus network extras. Calls from mobiles and other providers may vary. Overseas readers should call +44 115 896 0368.

Booking details

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Programme

10am Arrival and coffee

10.30am Talk with Aaron Bertelsen on the kitchen garden and growing for seasonal recipes

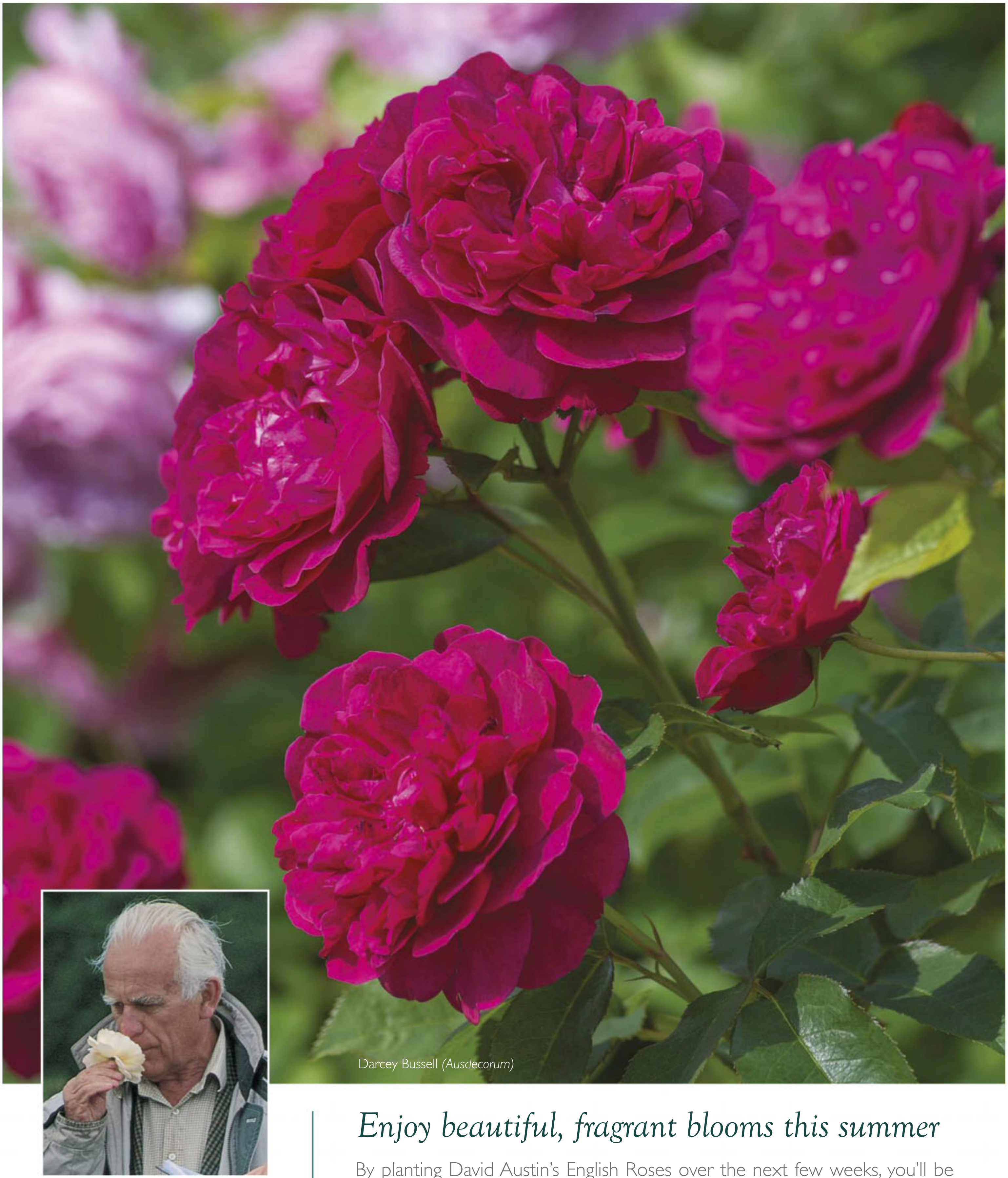
12.30pm Lunch in the Great Hall featuring recipes from the book

2pm Guided tour of Great Dixter gardens

3pm Tea in the Plant Nursery with 10% discount on plants

Gardens Illustrated reserves the right to change any element of any event due to circumstances beyond its reasonable control.

ANDREW MONTGOMERY



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Booking details

Price £2,998 per person, based on two people sharing (a single supplement of £300 will be levied by the hotels). The price includes: two nights' bed and breakfast at the 4-star **Copenhagen Admiral Hotel**, a stylish waterfront hotel where all rooms will have a harbour view, and two nights' bed and breakfast at the 4-star **Hotel Frederiksminde**, a luxury hotel in a stately 1890 manor house just a step from the beach; four evening meals with wine; three lunches; and return flights from London Heathrow.

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JONATHAN BARSOOK

The Tivoli Gardens in Copenhagen.

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We shall start our holiday in Tokyo, where we will explore the Ginza district and several historic palaces, shrines and temples. There will also be a day trip via Mt Fuji to Hakone and the beautiful Lake Ashi. We will visit the memorials at Hiroshima, before spending four nights in Japan's ancient capital, Kyoto. From here we shall see some of the most iconic Japanese temples, shrines and immaculate Zen gardens - highlights include the 'shrine-island' of Miyajima, Nijo Castle and the magnificent Toda-ji Temple at Nara. The final part of the holiday, based in Takayama, takes in some of the most picturesque rural areas of Japan including mountain villages, local markets and traditional artisans' workshops.

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The Buxton Opera Festival is a firm favourite in the calendar of all opera lovers. Performances are in Frank Matcham's exquisite 1903 opera house, located in the heart of this delightful spa town in the Peak District. We stay at The Old Hall hotel directly opposite the opera house. A day will be spent at Renishaw where we shall visit the house and explore the Italian gardens which were awarded the Historic Houses Association/Christie's Garden of the Year award in 2015. Our second excursion will be to Hardwick Hall, the most glorious Elizabethan house of them all.

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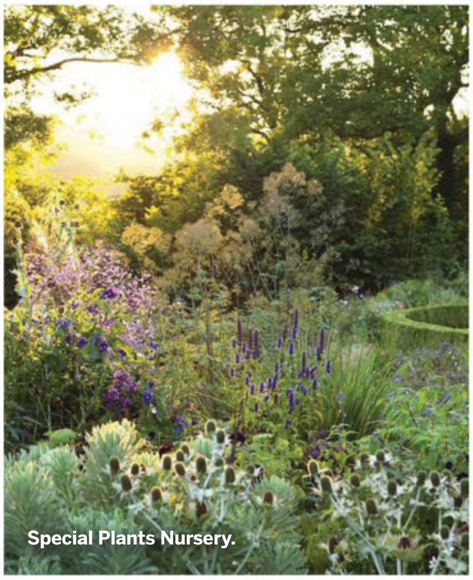

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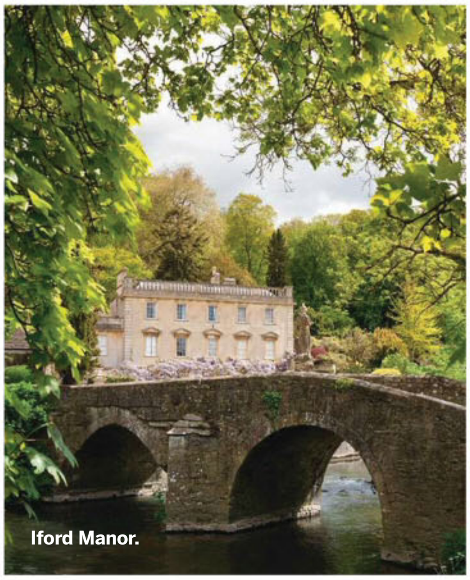

Iford Manor.

Bowood House.

The Courts Garden.

18-21 September 2017

Gardens of Wiltshire

Discover a selection of English country gardens, including a day spent with designer Tania Compton, with exclusive access to some of the county's finest private gardens

The southern English county of Wiltshire contains many World Heritage Sites including Stonehenge, Avebury and Salisbury Cathedral. Almost half the county is designated as an area of outstanding natural beauty, so it is not surprising to find a collection of outstanding gardens.

Our trip includes visits to **The Courts**, a country garden of perfect harmony with lots of late-summer interest. There's also the iconic Italianate garden at **Iford Manor**, designed by Harold Peto. Nestled on the hillside overlooking the river Frome, this is an exceptional garden and one that invites lingering. At **Bowood House**, we have an invitation to view Lord and Lady Lansdowne's private walled garden with its formal borders and productive kitchen garden. There's also **Cantax House**, **Ridleys Cheer** and an inspiring visit to renowned plantswoman, Derry Watkins' garden and nursery **Special Plants.**

Particular highlights, though, come when we are joined by Tania Compton, garden designer and author of the recently published *The Private Gardens of England*. Together we visit two gardens designed by Tania: **Fonthill House**, the home of Lord and Lady Margadale, and **Spilsbury Farm** where Tania lives with her husband the botanist Dr James Compton. Then it's on to **Moor Hatches**, a contemporary family garden designed by Tom Stuart-Smith. Such access is a rare treat.

We are accommodated for three nights at **The Manor House** hotel, set in the heart of Castle Combe – frequently referred to as the prettiest village in England – this is a stylish, comfortable hotel offering fine food and a peaceful ambience.

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TOUR LEADERS

Tania Compton's garden design career began at The English Gardening School. She is a trustee of the Garden Museum and a writer. Her latest book is *The Private Gardens of England*.

Dr Sophie Piebenga trained as a gardener at the National Trust and Kew. She then followed an interest in the conservation of historic landscapes and gardens, which included studying for a doctorate.

Booking details

Price £1,998 per person, based on two people sharing (a single supplement of £220 will be levied by the hotel). The price includes: three nights bed and breakfast at The Manor House, Castle Combe; two evening meals with wines at the hotel and one at an excellent local inn; plus four lunches and transport from Chippenham Railway Station. The price does not include extras at the hotel, or travel insurance.

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RACHEL WARNE; ANTHONY BROWN / ALAMY STOCK PHOTO; ANNA STOWE BOTANICA / ALAMY STOCK PHOTO; THE NATIONAL TRUST PHOTOLIBRARY / ALAMY STOCK PHOTO; TANIA COMPTON BY HUGO BURNAND

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Dig in

What's happening, where to go, what's in flower and what to buy this month

NEWS COMPILED BY **ALYS HURN**

Beth Chatto Gardens in Essex are among the gardens opening this year for the NGS, on 18 March.

GARDENS TO VISIT

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The 2017 edition of National Gardens Scheme's *Garden Visitor's Handbook* (£12.99), is out now. It's the must-have annual guide to the thousands of gardens that open through the NGS for charity in England and Wales. Also out this month is its sister publication the 2017 *Scotland's Gardens* guide (£5). Available from **scotlandsgardens.org** and all major bookshops, the new edition features 70 new gardens, including Carey House in Abernethy, transformed in just six years from a field of brambles. More than 80 of the 500 gardens featured have also been recognised for their historic horticultural significance, and will be part of the Year of History, Heritage and Archaeology organised by VisitScotland for 2017.

- Readers can buy the NGS *Garden Visitor's Handbook 2017* for £9. Go to **ngs.org.uk** and enter **GIGTV17** when prompted.

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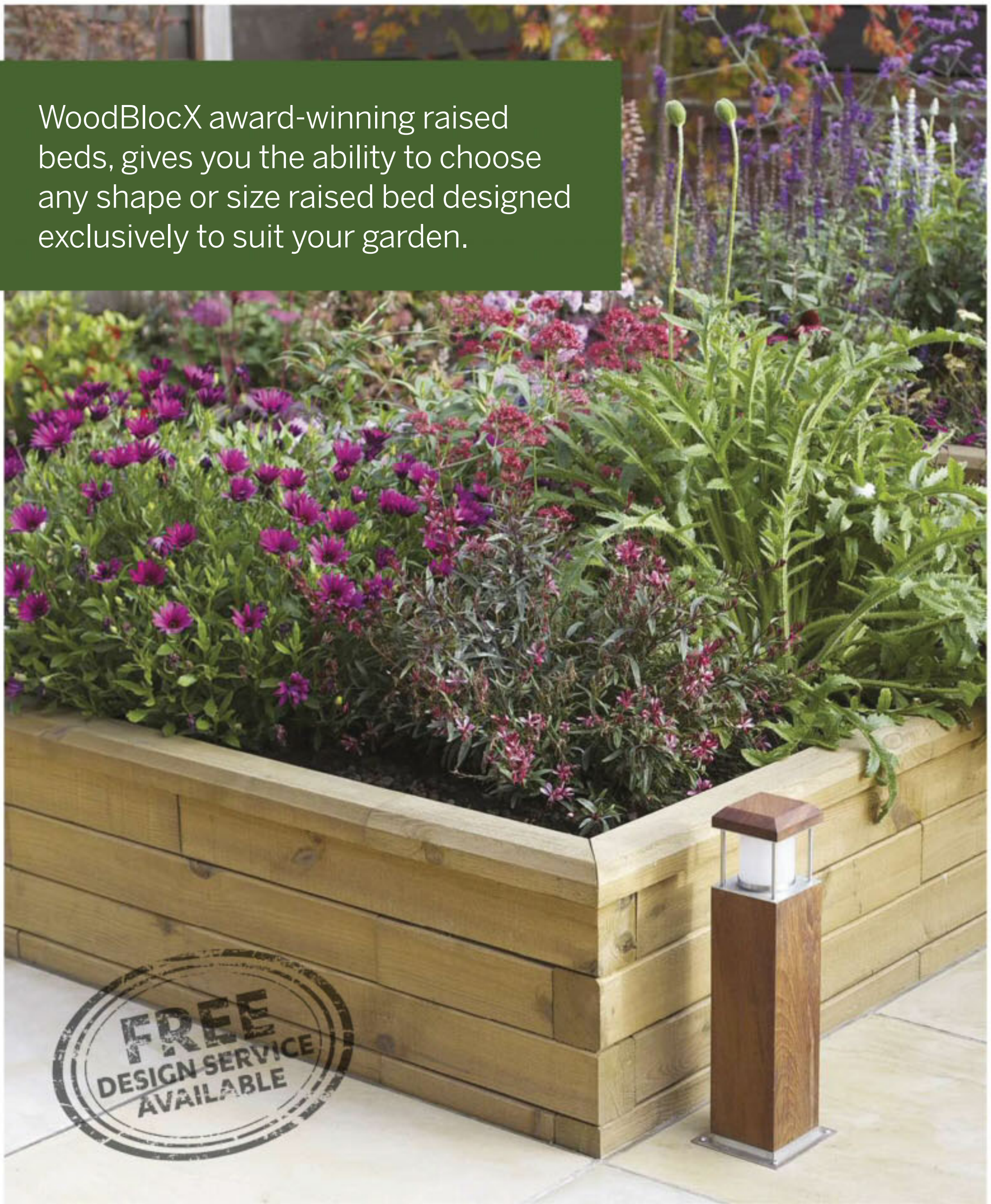

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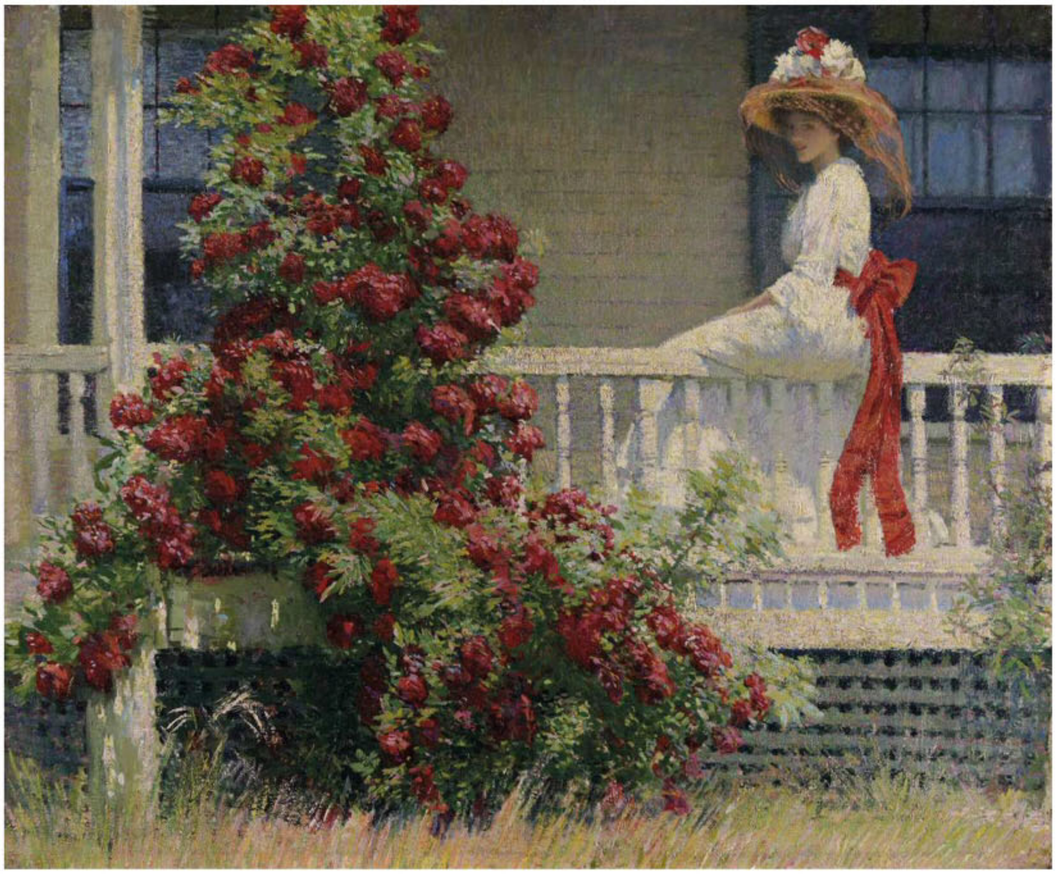
NEW DOCUMENTARY

Gardens as art

The Artist's Garden: American Impressionism and the Garden Movement was one of last year's sell-out exhibitions at the Pennsylvania Academy of the Fine Arts. Now a documentary of the exhibition is being released in cinemas throughout the UK bringing the collection of paintings to a much wider audience. Narrated by Gillian Anderson, the film explores American Impressionism and the growth of gardens in the USA in the years between 1887 and 1920, and looks at the work of artists, such as Philip Leslie Hale, whose 1909 painting *Crimson Rambler* is shown right. On nationwide release from 21 March. **exhibitiononscreen.com**



DAHLIA COLLECTIONS

The beauty of Burlesca

If you're looking to plant dahlias in the garden this year, you'll need to pot up your tubers now. Sarah Raven has an extensive range, including one new to her selection, *Dahlia* 'Burlesca' (left). Growing to a height of 80cm, its coral-like appearance and colour would suit a place in the middle of a border, in full sun and moist, well-drained soil. Pot up and keep in a light, frost-free place. You can buy one tuber for £4.50 or three for £10.50. **sarahraven.com**

ANTIQUES FOR INSIDE AND OUT

Finding the perfect antique pieces for your garden can be tricky. But Londoners have a new treasure trove to explore in the form of Lorfords. Well known for its showroom in the Cotswold town of Tetbury, Lorfords' new London shop is filled with beautiful pieces and in April it unveils its secluded garden, brimming with antique and mid-century delights. lorfordsantiques.com

JONATHAN BUCKLEY. *CRIMSON RAMBLER*, 1909. COURTESY OF THE PENNSYLVANIA ACADEMY OF FINE ARTS. PHILIP LESLIE HALE

Course leaders Noël Kingsbury and Annie Guilfoyle (below) will be offering hands-on practical advice on one-day masterclasses.

GARDEN MASTERCLASSES

Grow your skills

Garden designer Annie Guilfoyle and plantsman Noël Kingsbury have teamed up to offer a series of one-day masterclasses in garden design and planting. Run in association with *Gardens Illustrated*, and held at different locations around the country, the workshops are a chance to meet other passionate gardeners, while learning in small groups. For information see **gardenmasterclass.org**

A LITTLE HELP FROM THE WORMS

Organic, peat-free brand New Horizon has added a new ingredient of worm cast compost to the original blend of bark, coir and wood in its compost multi-purpose garden fertiliser. Naturally occurring microbes and trace elements found in worm cast should help encourage even more vigorous plant growth. £4.99 for 20 litres. gardenhealth.com

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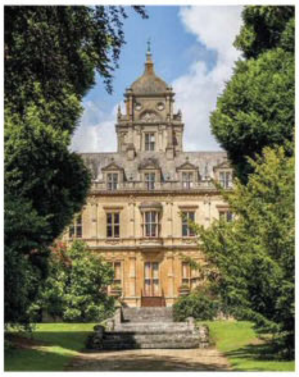
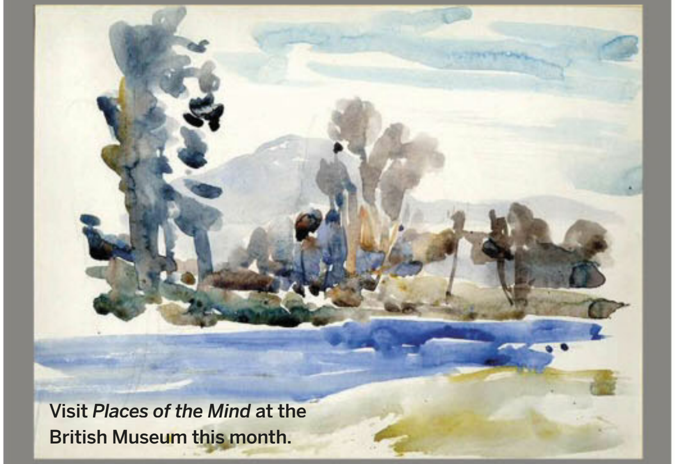


READER OFFER

Festival final call

It's your last chance to buy tickets to this year's *Gardens Illustrated* Festival, on 25 and 26 March. Make the most of our reader offer and enjoy 10 per cent off all remaining tickets. Use code **LM10** when prompted. Call 0871 230 7156 or visit **gardensfestival.com**

Diary



Visit *Places of the Mind* at the British Museum this month.

- **British Museum Exhibition** *Places of the Mind: British Watercolour Landscapes 1850-1950* celebrates the work of British landscape artists, showcasing 125 works by the likes of Edward Burne-Jones and Paul Nash. 23 February – 27 August, 10am-5.30pm. Free entry. British Museum, Great Russell Street, London WC1B 2DG. Tel 020 7323 8181, britishmuseum.org
- **Plant Heritage Open Day** Visit the complete collection of all known hellebore species at this National Collection holder. 5 March, 10am-3pm. Hazles Cross Farm, Hollins Lane, Kingsley, Staffordshire ST10 2EP. Tel 01538 752669, hazlescrossfarmnursery.co.uk
- **Greenhouse Gardening** Learn how to make the most of your greenhouse with this half-day course at Cambridge University Botanic Garden. 11 March, 10am-1pm. £35. 1 Brookside, Cambridge CB2 1JE. Tel 01223 336265, botanic.cam.ac.uk
- **Attracting Wildlife** A half-day course offering advice on natural pest control and creating garden habitats. 16 March, 9.30am-1pm. £30. Ryton Organic Gardens, Wolston Lane, Warwickshire CV8 3LG. Tel 024 7630 3517, gardenorganic.org.uk
- **Caerhays Bred Magnolias** Learn about the hybrid magnolias developed at Caerhays Castle and enjoy a guided tour of the garden. 17 March. 9.30am-1pm. £20. Caerhays Estate, Gorran, St Austell, Cornwall PL26 6LY. Tel 01872 501310, caerhays.co.uk
- **RHS Exhibition: Potted** This new exhibition explores our fascination with indoor gardening, from ferns in the 19th century to succulents in the 1960s. 17 March – 19 May, 10am-5pm. RHS Lindley Library, 80 Vincent Square, London SW1P 2PE. Tel 020 3176 5800, rhs.org.uk
- **Grow Your Own Cut-Flower Patch** Georgie Newbury, of Common Farm Flowers, helps you plan your own cutting garden. Includes lunch and posy-making workshop. 21 March, 11am-4.30pm. £135. Petersham Nurseries, Surrey TW10 7AB. Tel 020 8940 5230, petershamnurseries.com

AMBROSE McEVOY (1878-1927), *RIVER LANDSCAPE*, C.1910, WATERCOLOUR OVER GRAPHITE, 304 X 455 MM. © THE TRUSTEES OF THE BRITISH MUSEUM

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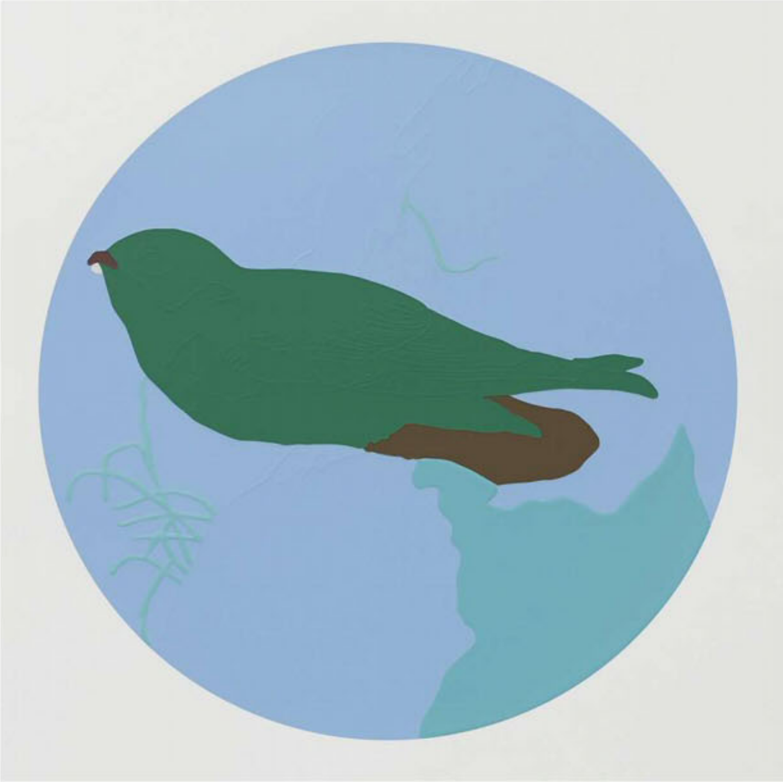

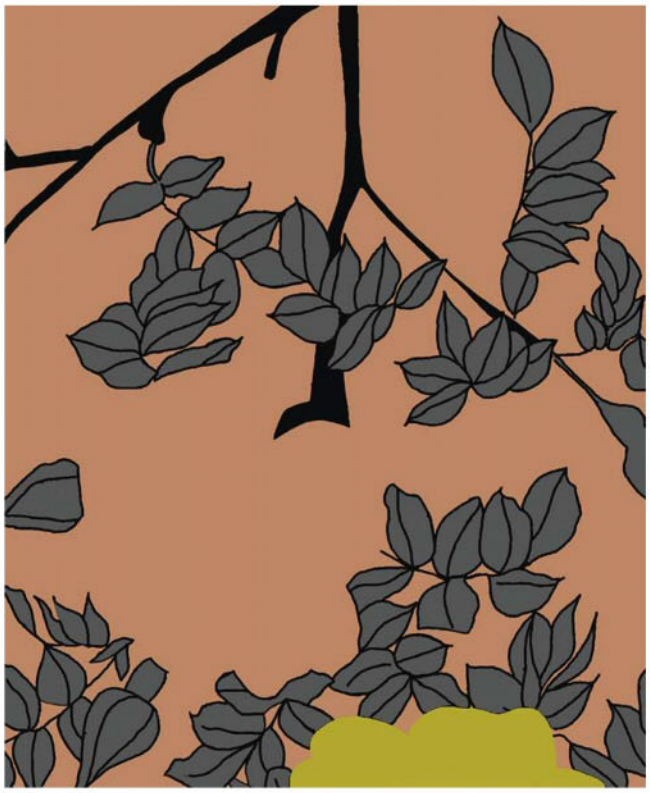

roy.ac/artsales

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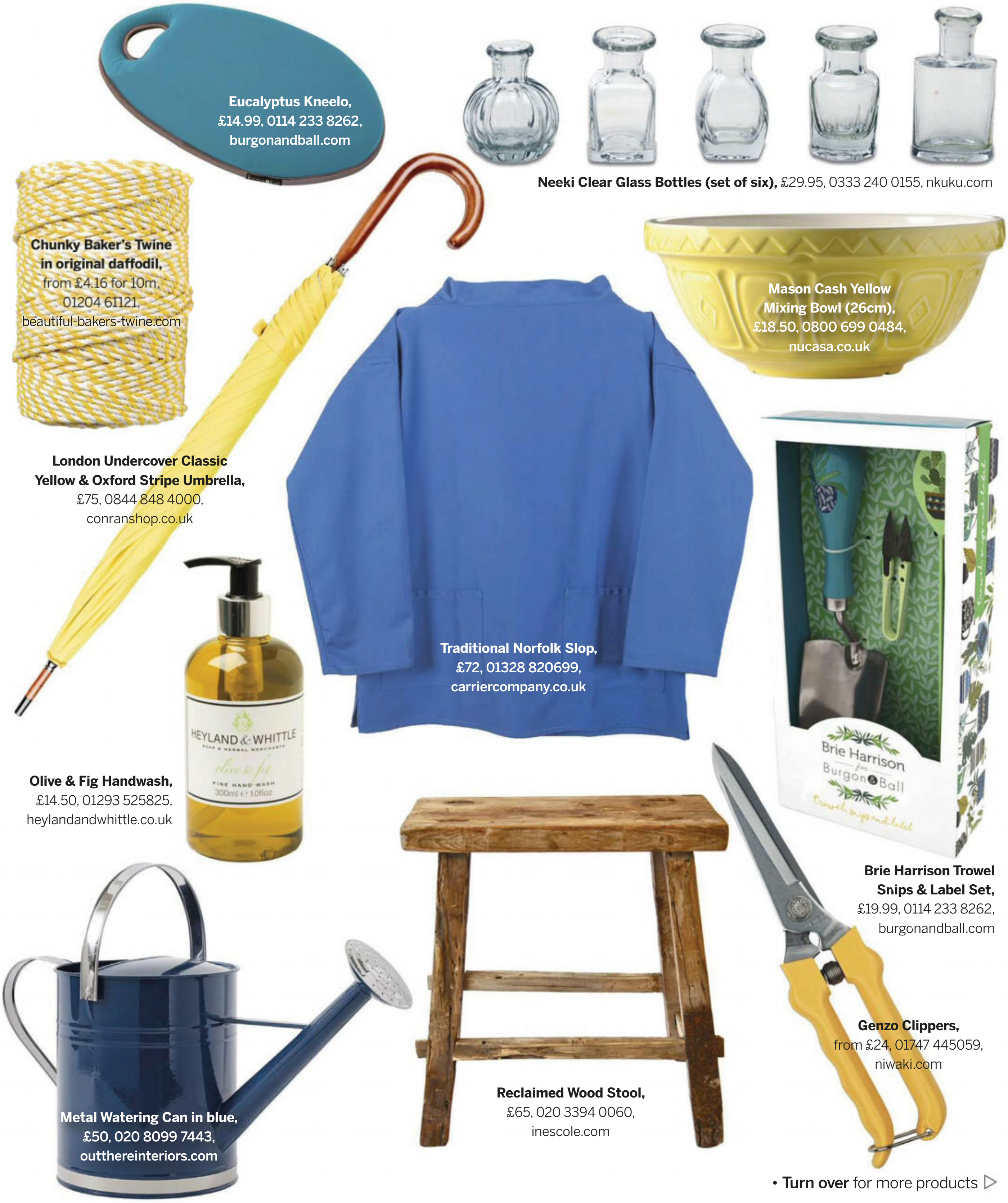
Royal Academy of Arts

From left: Gary Hume RA, *Migration*, 2013. Screen print on paper, 79.5 x 77.8 cm. Edition of 90. £2,160. Courtesy White Cube and the artist; *Grey Leaves*, 2004. Screen print, 71 x 59 cm. Edition of 250. £2,000. Courtesy Counter Editions and the artist

Shop front

Banish those winter blues with some colour therapy

COMPILED BY ALYS HURN



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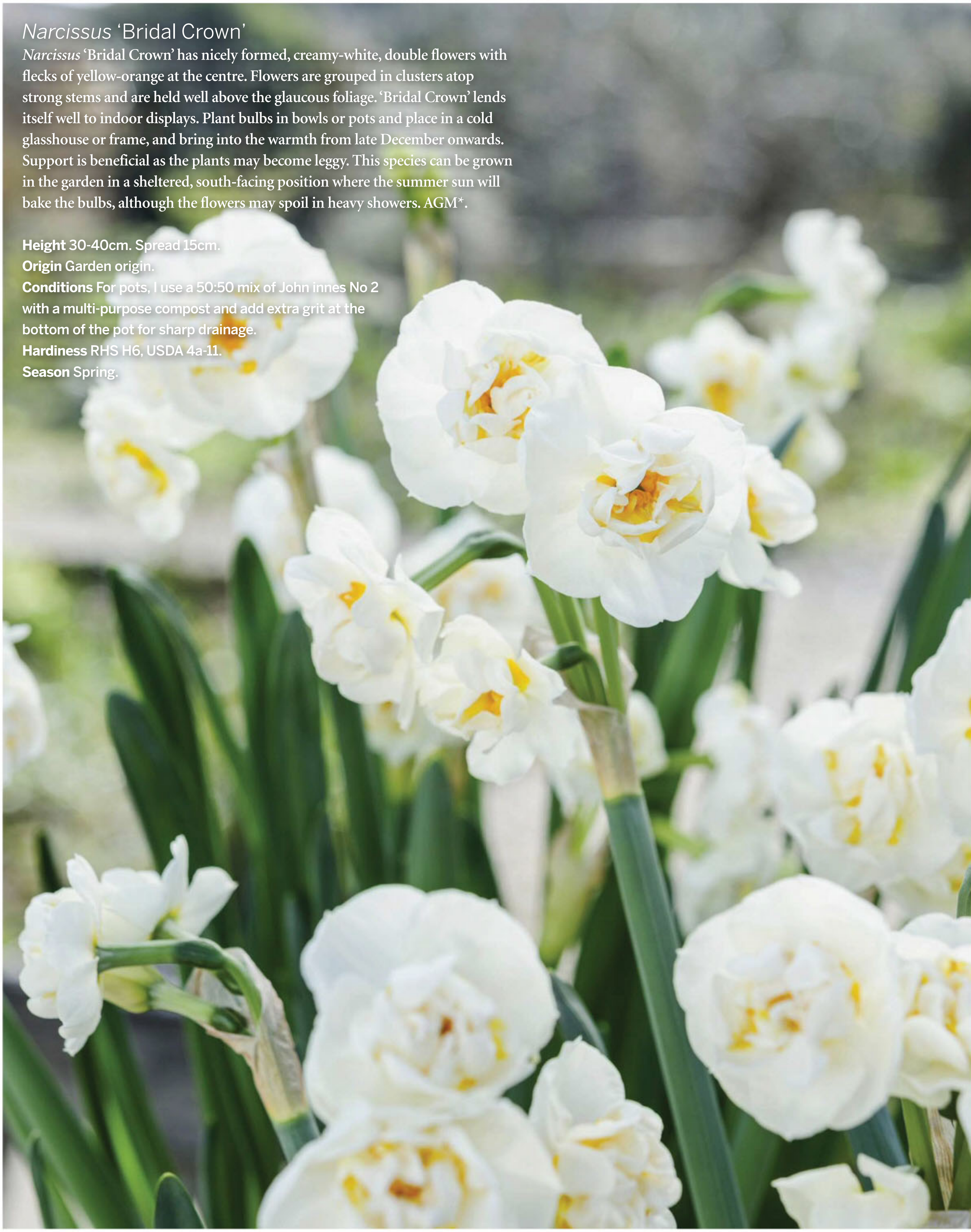
Narcissus 'Bridal Crown'

Narcissus 'Bridal Crown' has nicely formed, creamy-white, double flowers with flecks of yellow-orange at the centre. Flowers are grouped in clusters atop strong stems and are held well above the glaucous foliage. 'Bridal Crown' lends itself well to indoor displays. Plant bulbs in bowls or pots and place in a cold glasshouse or frame, and bring into the warmth from late December onwards. Support is beneficial as the plants may become leggy. This species can be grown in the garden in a sheltered, south-facing position where the summer sun will bake the bulbs, although the flowers may spoil in heavy showers. AGM*.

Height 30-40cm. Spread 15cm.
Origin Garden origin.
Conditions For pots, I use a 50:50 mix of John innes No 2 with a multi-purpose compost and add extra grit at the bottom of the pot for sharp drainage.
Hardiness RHS H6, USDA 4a-11.
Season Spring.



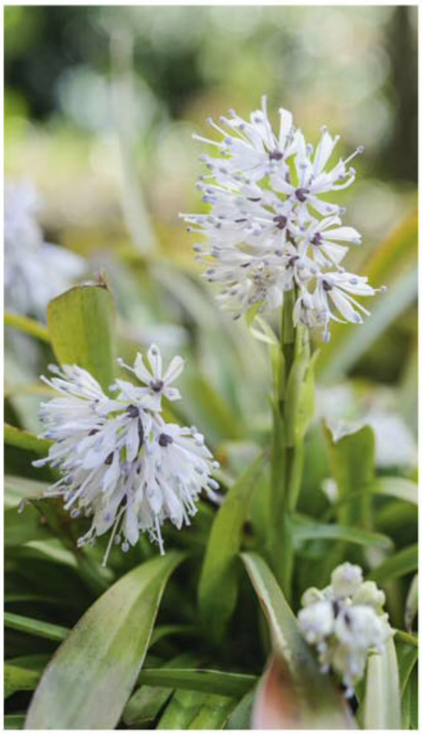
ANDREW MONTGOMERY

March plants

Bid farewell to winter with plants to give your garden an early boost of colour and get those borders into shape for the growing season

WORDS **MAT REESE** PHOTOGRAPHS **JASON INGRAM**

Mat Reese
is head gardener at
Malverleys, a private
garden in Hampshire.



Ypsilandra thibetica

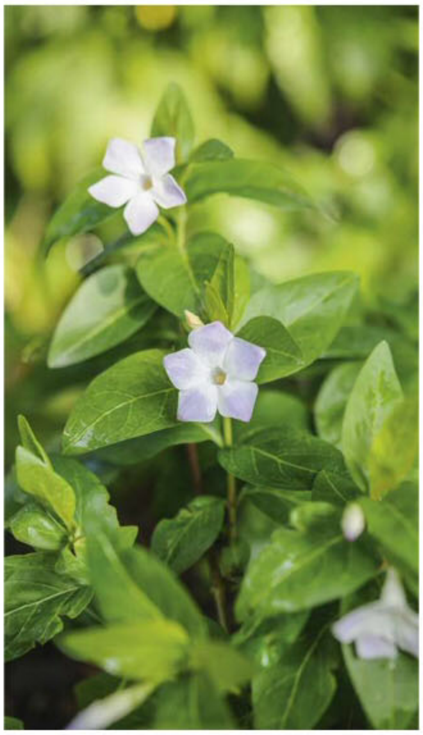
The rather musically named *Ypsilandra thibetica* is an evergreen woodlander that is native to the eastern Himalayas. This herbaceous perennial forms neat clumps of lanceolate, basal leaves that produce small spikes of scented, spidery, white flowers (ageing to pink). The smart foliage maintains its ornamental value for the summer and looks particularly good paired with feathery ferns. *Y. thibetica* is still relatively rare in cultivation, despite the fact that it has been on the scene for about 20 years.

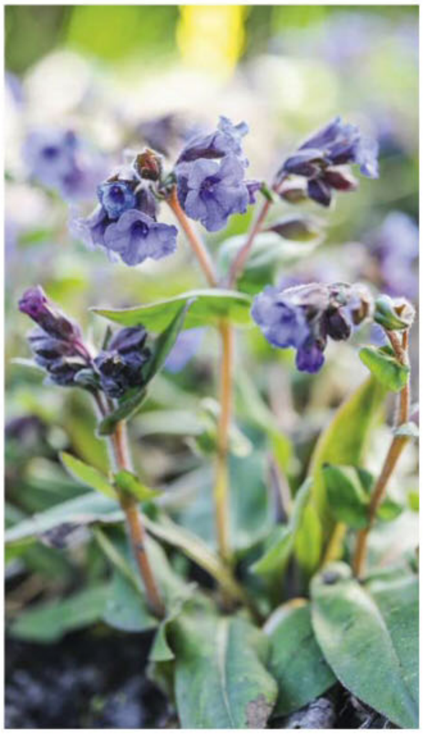
Height 30-40cm. **Spread** 30cm.
Origin Tibet, China.
Conditions. Moist, free-draining, humus-rich soil; some shade.
Hardiness RHS H7.
Season Spring into summer.

Vinca difformis 'Ruby Baker'

This useful and lovely periwinkle makes healthy ground cover that can cope with both shade and dry soil. A thick, lustrous carpet of dark-green foliage smothers weeds and produces lilac-white, propeller-shaped flowers through the darker winter months. Flowers are produced from young shoots. It resents cold north-easterlies and is happiest beneath a tree canopy. I have it planted in an evergreen woodland, where it flows through ferns and around trees and has been making steady progress over the past four years.

Height 40cm. **Spread** Ongoing (slowly).
Origin Garden origin.
Conditions Shelter and shade; can take drought.
Hardiness RHS H4.
Season Winter into spring.



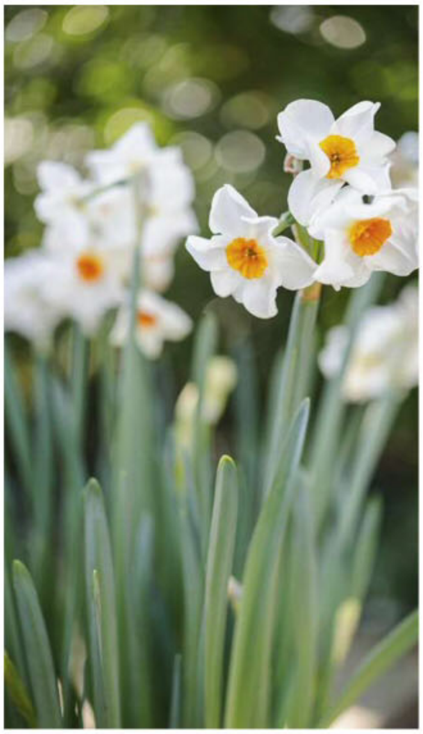


Pulmonaria 'Blue Ensign'

Pulmonaria 'Blue Ensign' is one of the best lungworts, producing mounds of smart, spring-green leaves topped with sprigs of rich, violet-blue flowers. It thrives in shady conditions and performs at a time of year when there is a dearth of colourful options. Use it under the skirt of a deciduous shrub or in swathes between summer-growing perennials. It will be quite happy under the summer canopy, and although it may look tired by this time of year, it will reappear in spring with gusto. AGM.

Height 10-30cm. **Spread** 40cm.
Origin Garden origin.
Conditions Most good garden soils; can take dry summer shade once established.
Hardiness RHS H6, USDA 3a-8b.
Season Spring.

*Holds an Award of Garden Merit from the Royal Horticultural Society.



Narcissus 'Cragford'

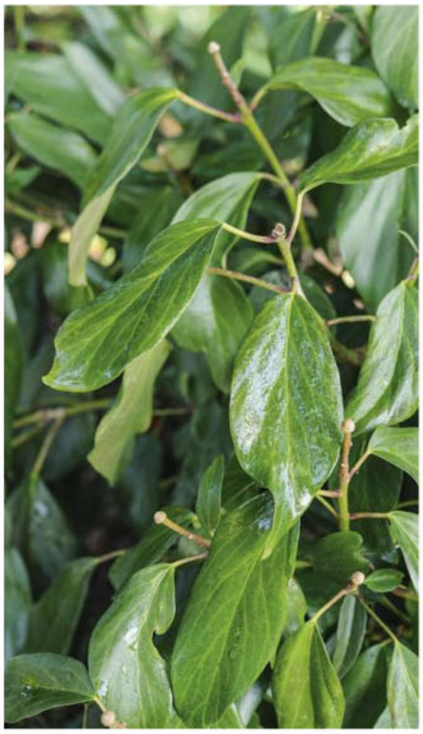
Narcissus 'Cragford' dates back to the 1930s and is grouped within the Tazetta division of daffodils. The star-shaped, white flowers are composed of six crinkled, slightly cupped petals surrounding a shallow, orange corona with a green eye. 'Cragford' has a sweet scent that may become cloying when placed in a confined space, so is perhaps best positioned in a hall or porch where it will not be too overwhelming. Plant the bulbs in pots in autumn, then place in a cold frame. Move into a warm place to force into flower from February onwards.

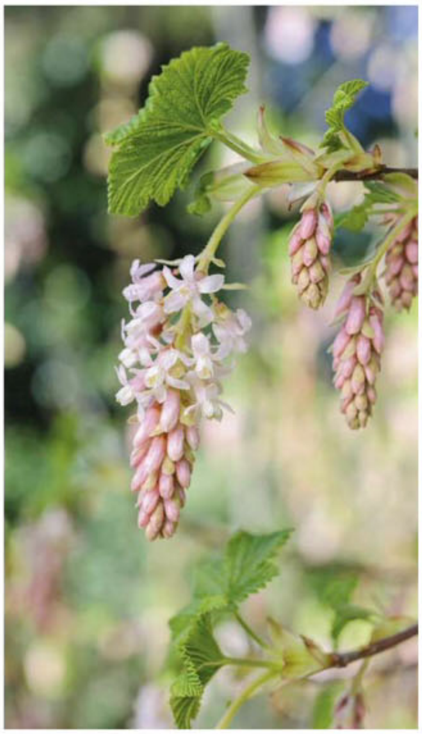
Height 40cm.
Origin Garden origin.
Conditions Good soil in full sun.
Hardiness RHS H4, USDA 5a-9a.
Season Spring.

Hedera colchica 'Dendroides'

Although not hugely rare, this is the sort of frank plant that may not stand out at a nursery. Its true value is not always immediately apparent, however, I think this non-climbing ivy is one of the smartest evergreen shrubs for the garden. It is drenched from head to toe in a thick coating of large, dark-green, lustrous leaves and provides good contrast to more flamboyant members of the garden. Typically, ivy flowers are produced in early autumn and the berries persist through the winter. The plant has excellent foliage for cutting.

Height 1.8m. **Spread** 1.8m.
Origin Caucasus, northern Iran.
Conditions Any soil; sun to partial shade.
Hardiness RHS H5, USDA 6a-9b.
Season All year.





Ribes sanguineum 'Porky's Pink'

All too often, if a garden plant is considered common or easy to grow, it is unfairly disregarded. This frequently happens with a wonderful tribe of flowering currants, of which I consider this to be one of the prettiest. The small flowers, held in pendent, icy-pink racemes, are produced from copper-coloured twigs on an open, airy frame. The young, sparse foliage allows light to reach every single flower and looks especially beautiful in the ebbing spring sunshine. Prune after flowering if you feel the need to do so.

Height 2.5m. **Spread** 2.5m.
Origin Western North America.
Conditions Any soil; sun to partial shade.
Hardiness RHS H6, USDA 5a-8a.
Season Late winter into early spring.

Places to visit

Recommended places to see seasonal plants at their best.

Part of Great Windsor Park, **The Savill Garden** has one of the finest collections of spring bulbs in the country. In March, the dwarf daffodils form great swathes in the meadows. Magnolias and other rare shrubs will also be starting to flower, and will continue through the spring, with outstanding displays of erythroniums in April. The Savill Garden, Wick Lane, Englefield Green, Surrey TW20 0UU. Tel 01753 860222, windsorgreatpark.co.uk

JOHN GLOVER / ALAMY STOCK PHOTO

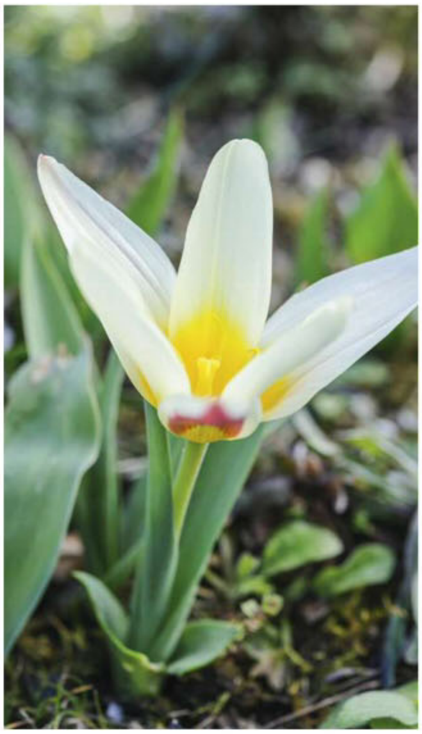
The Savill Garden.

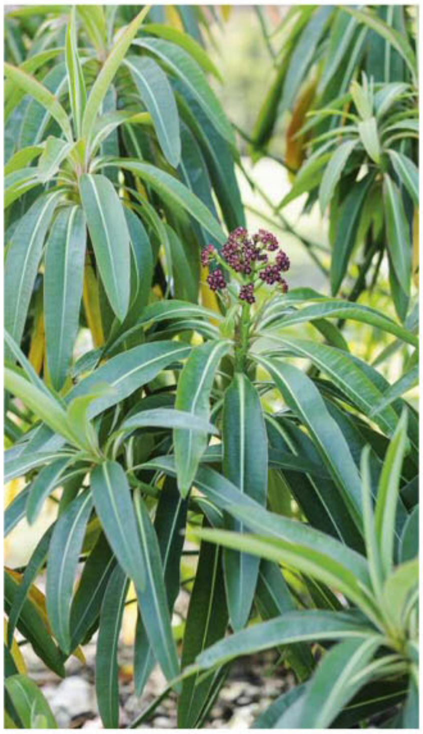
In Cornwall, gardens will already be in full swing. **Caerhays Castle** is particularly good in March, with magnolias, camellias and rhododendrons (including some of the special fragrant varieties). Also on the estate is Burncoose Nurseries, a wonderful source of rare

Tulipa 'The First'

The Kaufmanniana tulips are the earliest in flower and put on a wonderful show. In the early spring sunshine, the petals open so wide that the flowers appear to be almost flat, which explains its common name, the waterlily tulip. When planted en masse, they make a sumptuous sheet of interlinking petals that is so dense the soil is obscured. We plant the bulbs through thyme and sedum towards the front of the border in stony soil that gets baked during the summer months. *Tulipa* 'The First' is striped cream and red outside, and is cream with a yellow centre.

Height 25cm. **Spread** 10cm.
Origin Central Asia.
Conditions Free-draining soil; sunny site.
Hardiness RHS H7, USDA 3a-7b.
Season Spring.





Euphorbia mellifera

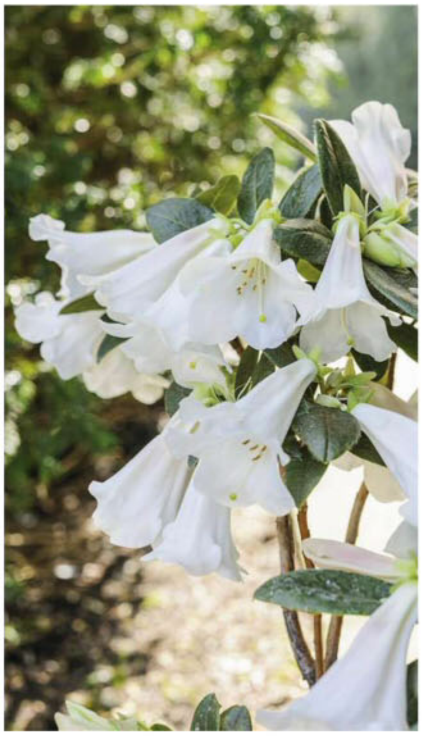
The long, narrow foliage of this shrubby spurge makes quite a statement in the garden, although it still sits comfortably within the flower borders. This handsome form was grown from seed collected in Madeira. Small, understated maroon flowers are produced in spring and smell of honey. Plants become leggy and untidy with age and should be replaced with young specimens. Seed-grown plants can reach up to two metres in three years. Needs a sheltered position. AGM.

Height 2.5m. **Spread** 2.5m.
Origin Madeira and Canary Islands.
Conditions Sunny, sheltered site with free-draining soil.
Hardiness RHS H3, USDA 8b.
Season Spring flowering with year-round foliage.

Rhododendron 'Countess of Haddington'

Clusters of pretty blushing-pink buds open to beautiful white flowers in March, lasting for three weeks. The delicate scent is only detectable when the anthers are ripe. It is best planted in a terracotta pot in free-draining, ericaceous compost, and should be watered and fed lightly and often through the warmer months. Slightly tender, it requires the winter protection of a cool conservatory in all but the mildest parts of the country. Release into a shady position in the garden in spring.

Height 1.5m. **Spread** 1.5m.
Origin Garden origin.
Conditions Provide shelter from easterlies; moist, well-drained, acidic soil.
Hardiness RHS H3, USDA 5b-8b.
Season Spring.



shrubs and trees. If you're visiting while on holiday, you can arrange for plants to be posted back home so you don't have to lug them around with you. Caerhays Estate, Gorran, St Austell, Cornwall PL26 6LY. Tel 01872 501310, caerhays.co.uk

If you continue south (almost as far as you can go), you'll find **Trewidden**, a gem of a garden bathed in the warm, humid, maritime air where trees do very well. Magnolias take on epic proportions here and there are many 'champion' trees, often covered in an enchanting encumbrance of moss and lichens. There is also a wonderful tree fern dell, one the largest plantings of its type in Europe. Trewidden, Buryas Bridge, Penzance, Cornwall TR20 8TT. Tel 01736 363021, trewiddengarden.co.uk

Caerhays Castle.

JOHN HUSBAND / ALAMY STOCK PHOTO

Not far from Trewidden is **Lower Kenneggy Nurseries**. It stocks a good range of high-quality plants with an emphasis on those that thrive in a coastal climate, as well as the rare and unusual. Most of the plants are propagated on site. Lower Kenneggy Nurseries, Rosudgeon, Penzance, Cornwall TR20 9AR. Tel 01736 762959, lowerkenneggynurseries.co.uk

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IN THE GARDEN

This is the month to share the love with your gardening neighbours by making cuttings of your very best-flavoured soft fruits and vines

WORDS **JOJO TULLOH** ILLUSTRATIONS **SARAH YOUNG**

We growers put a lot of time, money and physical labour into our plots. What we take out is usually for our own selfish use. Fair enough, you might say, after all that effort. But this month, why not take a more altruistic approach? Now, while plants are still dormant, is a good time to prune soft-fruit bushes and vines. This will give you lots of potential hardwood cuttings, each of which could make a whole new plant. Why not pass on those plants you think most highly of? I inherited an ancient yet highly fruitful vine at the back of my allotment; each year it produces a heavy crop of greenish grapes, which I harvest, crush and sieve. I then sweeten this juice with sugar (not too much). Diluted with fizzy water, it makes a refreshing grape soda. I usually cut the vine back at the end of winter, which, by happy coincidence, is just the right time to make hardwood cuttings.

This year I have been saving the prunings for a very specific purpose. Beans on Balconies is a project currently running in Walthamstow, northeast London. Overseen by arts development organisation Artillery, it encourages residents to grow fruit and vegetables in small spaces such as balconies or courtyards. Meetings are held every two weeks to swap seeds, plants and advice, and I recently took part in one of their 'growers' socials'. My contribution: a bundle of vine sticks ready to pot up into cuttings. We chatted as we snipped the vine cuttings (from healthy growth of the current year) into a lengths about 15-20cm long. We tried to use cuttings with three or four nodes, and marked the top with a slanting cut (to dispel water). We cut across the bottom horizontally and made a little nick or wound to encourage growth. To help speed things up, I had made some willow tea in advance [issue 230, page 25] into which we dipped the ends of the cuttings (willow shoots contain indolebutyric acid, a plant hormone that stimulates root growth).

We put some grit in the bottom of our pots followed by potting compost; when planting, we made sure that at least two-thirds of each cutting was beneath the soil. If planting outside, prepare a trench, dig in some garden compost and firm the cuttings in with about 10cm between each cutting and 40cm between trenches. If there is a hard frost, you may need to firm the cuttings back in. Leave until the following autumn, making sure they do not dry out over the summer. After we had washed our hands, we munched on dolmas (stuffed vine leaves) made by a local Turkish gardener and nibbles of grape *glyko* [issue 227, page 28].

WHAT TO DO NOW – CHIT POTATOES

I'm sure it's not common to memorialise someone by growing potatoes, but this year I'm planting a waxy salad potato in memory of a dear friend and wonderful gardener who died recently. On my last visit to his garden he recommended 'Anya' as his favourite potato. It's an oval potato with pinkish skin and white flesh like a less knobbly 'Pink Fir Apple' potato. It has a nutty flavour and a waxy texture that is a little smoother than 'Pink Fir Apple'. If you haven't already done so, now is the time to chit your potatoes. I stand mine rose-end up (the end with more dents) in a empty egg tray in a light but unheated room and wait for them to form sprouts about 5cm before planting. 'Anya', £5.15 for 2kg from Tuckers Seeds (tuckers-countrystores.com), is described as the 'perfect salad potato'.

IN THE KITCHEN

Cabbages and cauliflowers are the kings of winter vegetables – you just have to know how to handle them

Both cauliflowers, with their creamy curds, and crisp Savoy cabbages, with their crinkled leaves, are undeniably beautiful. As edibles, the most common approach to cooking them (plainly boiled) is often the least rewarding. Cauliflower is delicious with a cheese sauce (see below), but it is also very good broken into florets and roasted, either tossed in a spice mix (1tsp ground coriander, ½tsp chilli flakes, 1tsp ground turmeric and a large pinch of sea salt mixed with 75ml sunflower oil), or with 1tbsp freshly chopped rosemary, salt, pepper and 3tbsp olive oil. Either way, roast the cauliflower at 180°C/350°F/Gas 4 for 45 minutes, stirring the florets every 15 minutes. One of the simplest and most delicious ways to eat cabbage is as a hot slaw: thinly slice an onion, a cabbage and two apples, and fry them in 1tbsp of oil, starting with the onion. When that starts to brown, add the apple and a minute later the cabbage with a splash of vinegar, salt and pepper, and 2tbsp water. Cook quickly on a high heat until the cabbage is just cooked. These are side dishes but both vegetables can also take centre stage, as in the three recipes below.

RECIPES

Roman cauliflower

The combination of flavours in this Italian recipe is revelatory. Take one cauliflower, four cloves of garlic, ground into a paste with ½tsp sea salt, 1tbsp freshly chopped rosemary, ½tsp chilli flakes and six or eight tinned anchovy fillets (depending on size). Cut the cauliflower into quarters and boil for three minutes. Drain. Heat 100ml of olive oil in a pan big enough for the caulifower and fry the garlic briefly before adding the chilli flakes, chopped anchovy and rosemary. Stir, add the quartered cauliflower, baste well, then cover and cook for 20 minutes over a low heat, stirring and basting two or three times. If it catches, add a drop of water. The cauliflower should be mashably tender. Eat with a squeeze of lemon and lots of bread.

Stuffed baked cabbage

Take one hard green cabbage (Savoy works best), six free-range pork sausages (about 500g), one clove of garlic, one small onion, 1tbsp freshly chopped parsley, a couple of fresh sage leaves and one egg. Take the tough outer leaves off the cabbage. Push open the cabbage and cut out the heart (about the size of a walnut), otherwise keeping the cabbage whole. Chop the heart finely with the onion, garlic and herbs. Skin the sausages and mix well with the chopped cabbage, herbs, garlic and onion, then mix in the egg and season with salt and pepper. Set aside. Meanwhile, boil the cabbage whole for three minutes. Using tongs, carefully remove the cabbage, plunge it into cold water then drain upside down. When cool, separate the leaves and, working from the centre out, put a spoonful of the sausage mixture between each leaf. Pat the cabbage into shape. Take a big sheet of parchment paper, butter it well, then place the cabbage in the centre and tie some string around it. Put the cabbage parcel into a pot or casserole in which it will sit snugly, and place this inside a baking tray with water half way up the sides of the dish. Bake in the oven at 180°C/350°F/Gas 4 for 90 minutes, cut into slices and serve with a jug of freshly made tomato sauce.

Cauliflower in a parmesan cream

This recipe is adapted from Louis Eustache Ude's bestselling book of 1813, *The French Cook*. I agree with Ude – grilling rather than baking makes for a less oily finish. Take one firm white cauliflower, 30g butter, 40g flour, 400ml milk, a pinch of freshly grated nutmeg, salt and pepper, 75g freshly grated parmesan, 75g freshly grated gruyère, 2tbsp breadcrumbs and a little butter. Melt the butter in a pan and add the flour, stirring for a minute. Raise the heat and start whisking in the milk. When you have a good smooth sauce, turn the heat down very low and cook gently for 20 minutes, stirring occasionally. Ten minutes before you want to eat, break the cauliflower into florets and boil them in salted water for three minutes. Drain well. Butter a gratin dish. Add half the cheese to the sauce and stir well. Tip the cauliflower into the sauce and stir to coat. Pour into the gratin dish, sprinkle over the remaining cheese and breadcrumbs and dot about 15g of butter on top. Place under the grill (not too hot) and keep a very close eye on it. When the mixture is beautifully golden, remove and serve. □

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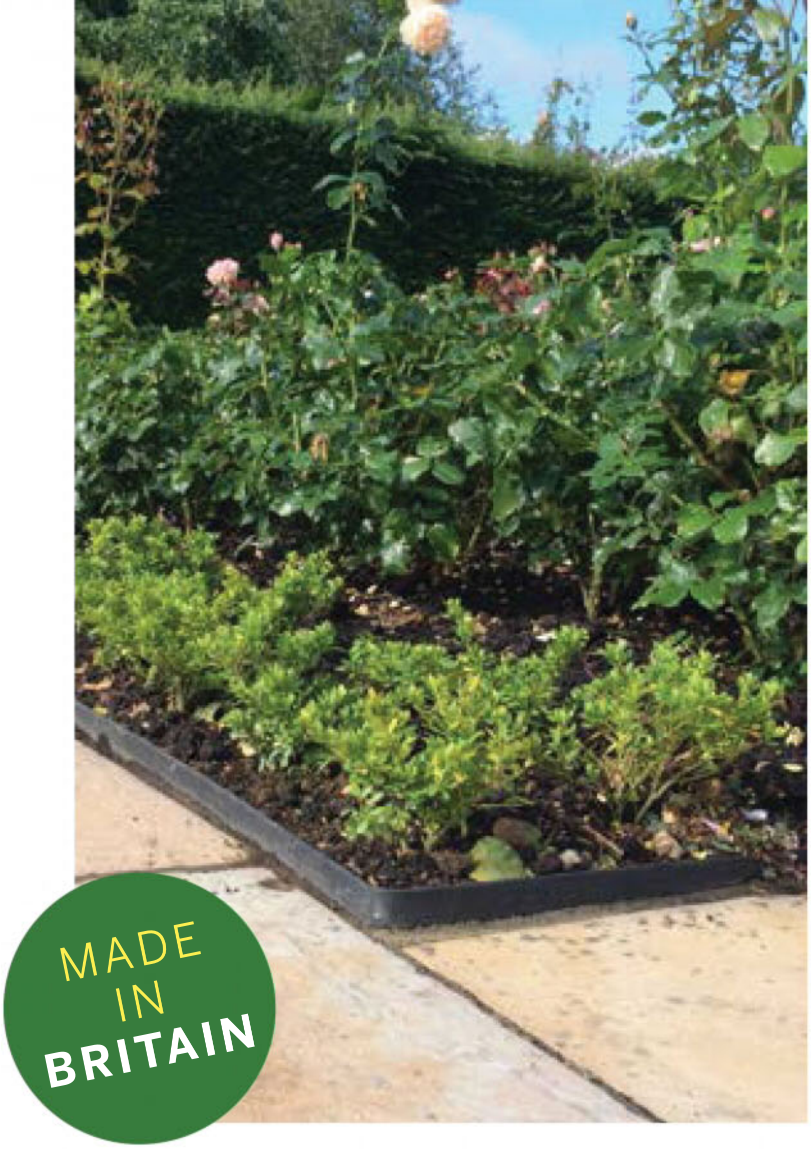

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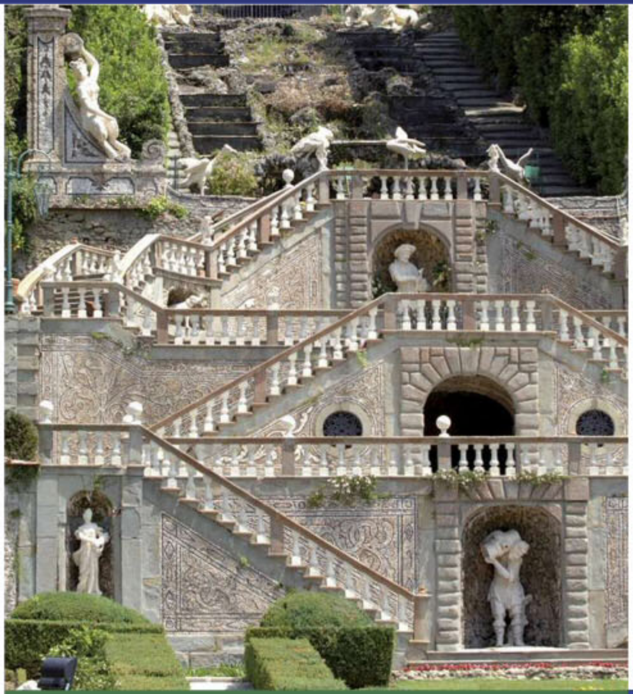

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Sam Pagett

After gaining several years of gardening experience in the UK, Sam is extending his horticultural knowledge with a stint at the Jerusalem Botanical Gardens

PORTRAIT ANDREW MONTGOMERY

Earliest gardening memory Our family garden consisted mostly of lawns with a large, rather weedy border. The annual weeding of this space for a small payment was my earliest experience.

First plant love Seeing the sea of *Hyacinthoides non-scripta* rushing down the valley at Rannerdale in the Lake District takes my breath away. I still try to see them every year.

Who are your horticultural heroes? I love reading about plant hunters of the past, such as Richard Evans Schultes and Alfred Russel Wallace. The effects their discoveries in South America had on humanity can be considered profound.

A worthwhile tip for every gardener Everyone tells you to take notes but that's less than half the battle. Unless you refer to your notes and re-read them, you won't remember much more than if you hadn't written it down. I find re-writing notes in a neat form is a worthwhile learning process. This also gives an opportunity for further research and to add more information.

Hardest gardening related thing you've ever had to do? Learning the basics, for example the first hundred or so botanical names, the first time performing practical tasks, such as staking. You are so aware it's taking far too long to complete the task but can't do it any faster. When the basics finally came together, I really began to enjoy gardening — before that it was just stressful.

What principles have guided your attitude to gardening? Always striving to learn and improve as nothing is ever perfect. Listening to, and observing others as it's the fastest way to learn.

What heartens you about our attitudes to horticulture today? The people I meet in our profession never cease to amaze me. So many energetic, passionate people happy to share their love of gardening with anyone. Gardening makes people feel good and that makes it a brilliant profession to be in.

Contact You can follow Sam's botanical adventures via his blog plantsandplacesblog.wordpress.com

The Friends of Jerusalem Botanical Gardens offers more information about the gardens, internships, volunteering opportunities and ways to support the gardens' horticultural endeavours. Tel 020 8238 2779, websitefriendsjbg.org.uk or email friendsjbg@gmail.com

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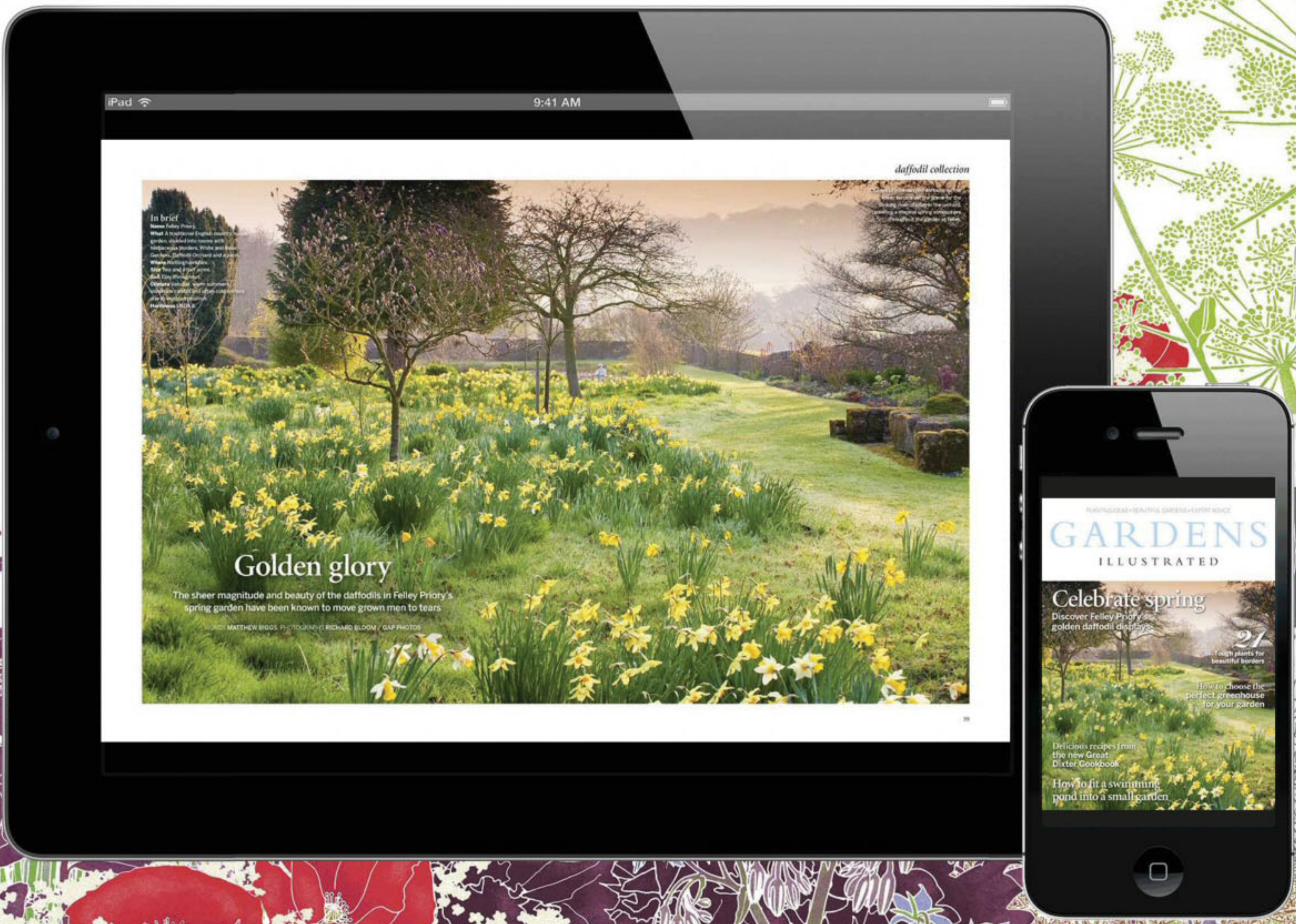
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daffodil collection
In brief
Golden glory
The sheer magnitude and beauty of the daffodils in Felley Priory's spring garden have been known to move grown men to tears
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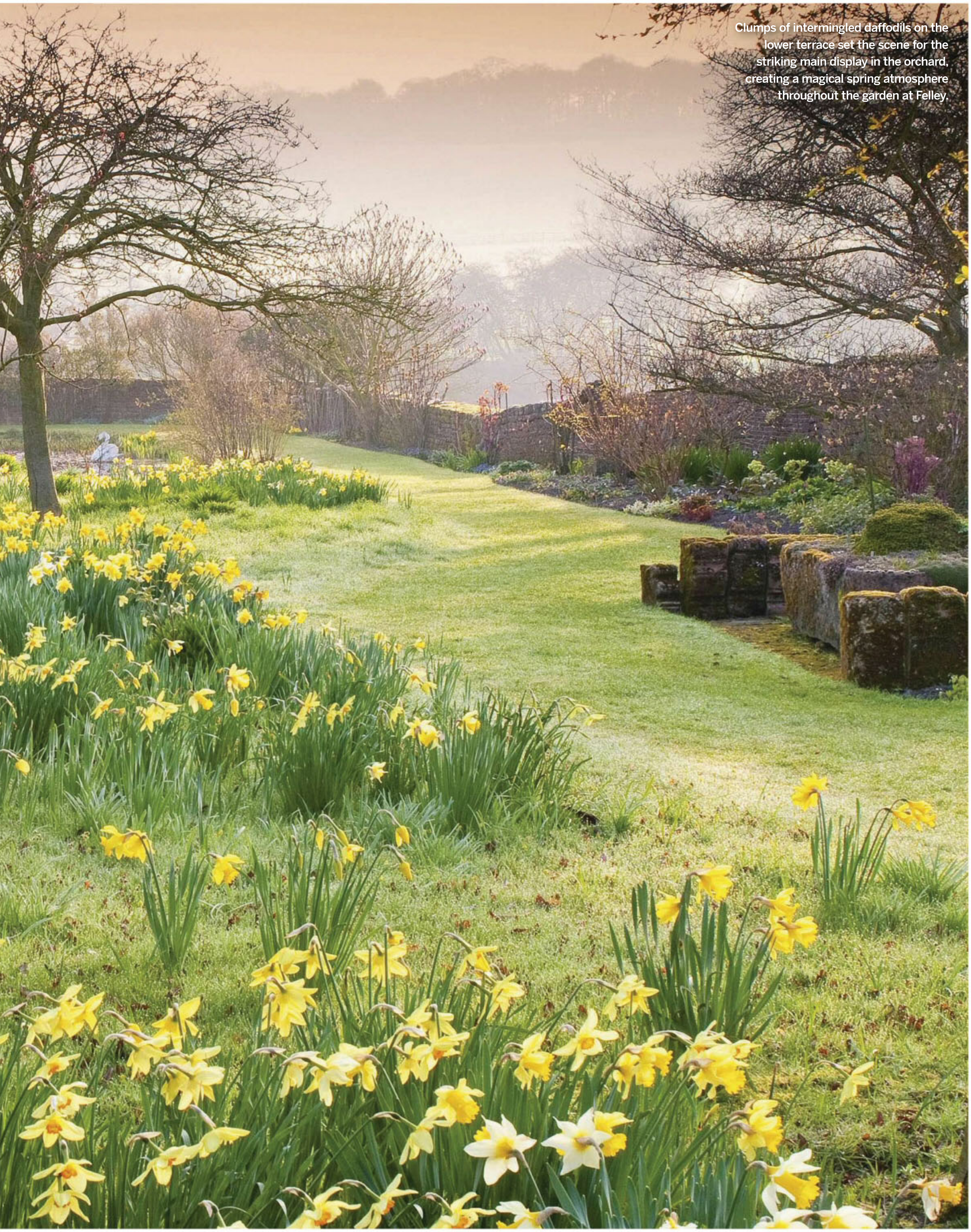
In brief

Name Felley Priory.
What A traditional English country house garden, divided into rooms with herbaceous borders, White and Rose Gardens, Daffodil Orchard and a pond.
Where Nottinghamshire.
Size Two and a half acres.
Soil Clay throughout.
Climate Variable, warm summers, moderate rainfall and often cold winters due to exposed position.
Hardiness USDA 8.

Golden glory

The sheer magnitude and beauty of the daffodils in Felley Priory's spring garden have been known to move grown men to tears

WORDS **MATTHEW BIGGS** PHOTOGRAPHS **RICHARD BLOOM / GAP PHOTOS**



Clumps of intermingled daffodils on the lower terrace set the scene for the striking main display in the orchard, creating a magical spring atmosphere throughout the garden at Felley.

The large pond, which sits below the formal garden, reflects the surrounding trees and helps to draw the magic of the skyscape downwards.

ALAN METHERINGHAM

The garden at Felley Priory, overlooking a gently sloping valley and woodlands in north Nottinghamshire, is renowned as a garden for all seasons, but for many it's the spring display in the Daffodil Orchard that is the crowning glory.

The property has been owned by the Chaworth-Musters family since 1822, and the current generation continues to enjoy and take an active interest in the development of the garden. However, it is thought that it was the Oakes family, who were tenants in the 1940s, who planted the first daffodils. "We know from old photographs that the daffodil orchard existed in 1946, long before the garden was developed in the mid-1970s by Mrs Maria Chaworth-Musters. She used her skills as an interior designer to lay out the garden in front of the house as it stands today, with its topiary hedges, herbaceous borders and vistas," explains head gardener, Lindsey Ellis. "Many of the fruit trees in the daffodil orchard are ancient. We've lost a number of them over the years and are in the process of planting replacements using apples, such as 'Katja', known as Katy, and 'Fiesta'. They have been chosen because we need cultivars that maintain the character of the orchard yet are of a manageable size, so they don't inhibit the growth of the daffodils."

The site is long and narrow, covering half an acre, but what makes this massed planting so special is the slight slope on the land: it's only around five degrees from horizontal, but is enough to create an impression of depth, so the daffodils form a dense golden expanse. No one can say if this is as a result of serendipity or simply a stroke of horticultural genius, but the impact is undeniable.

Immaculately clipped topiary hedging leads visitors through the garden to the ▷

> *"The slightly sloping land creates an impression of depth, so the daffodils form a dense sea of gold, and the impact is undeniable"*

Naturalising bulbs

Plant in September, or October at the latest, in full sun to part shade, in moisture-retentive, free-draining soil. When planting several different daffodils, put 25 to 50 bulbs of your first type into a bucket, scatter them, then repeat with the next cultivar, and so on, planting them where they land at a depth of three times the size of the bulb. If you have yet to perfect the art of even distribution, move any bulbs that have fallen too closely together so that they are 15 to 20 centimetres apart and can spread comfortably.

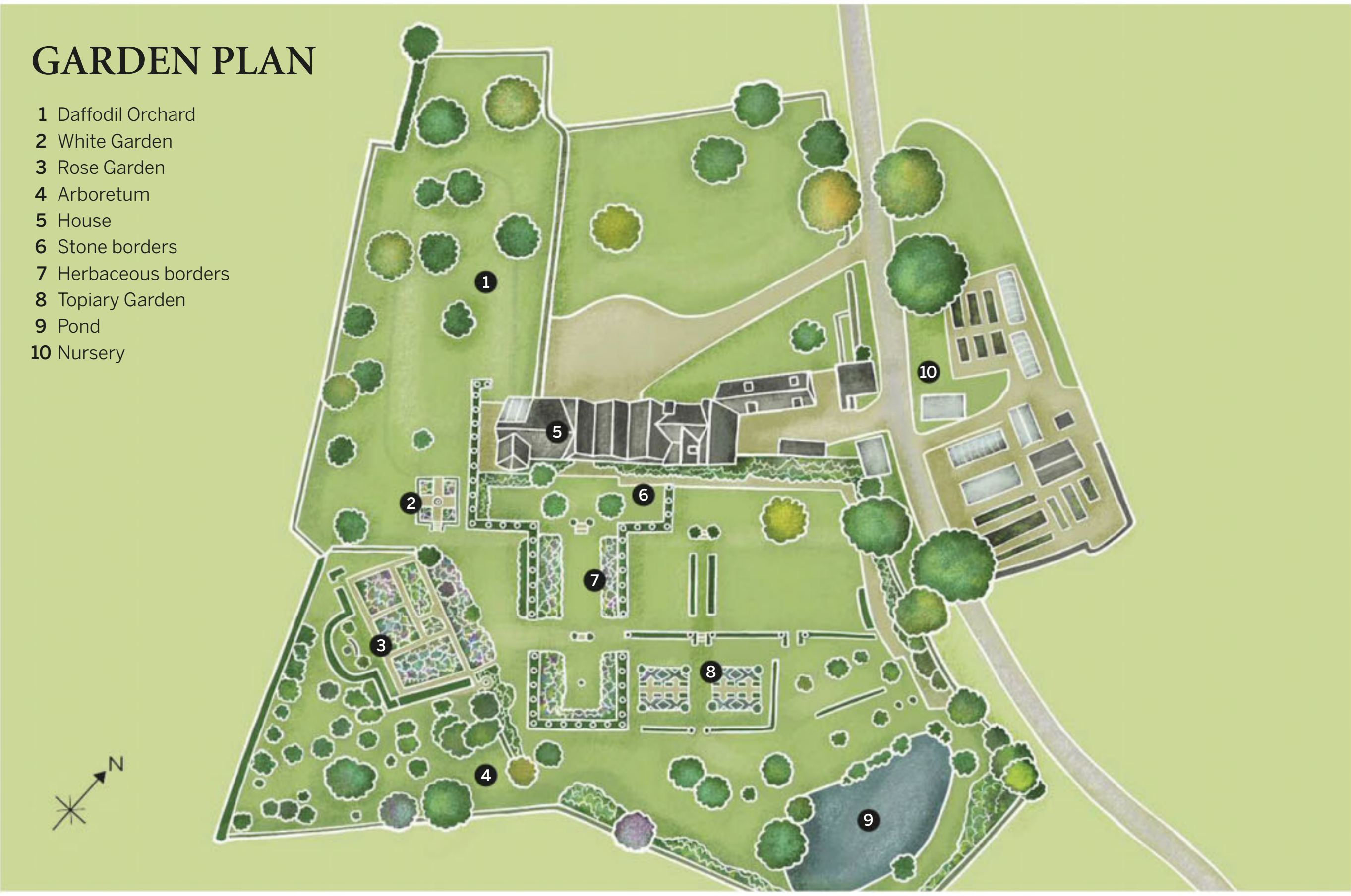
When planting in large areas, remove the turf and dig the ground over. Add a general purpose feed, plant the bulbs and replace the turf. When planting in smaller quantities or filling in gaps, use a spade.

Deadheading is essential for good growth, but do not remove the leaves or tie them in bunches; instead, wait until they have died back naturally before cutting the grass.

The flowers in the Daffodil Orchard bloom before the fruit trees start to blossom; the bare branches afford a view over the fields beyond.

The neat geometric forms of the topiary in the main garden form a contrast to the relaxed informality of the naturalised daffodil display.

ALLAN HARRIS



HANNAH McVICAR

▷ Daffodil Orchard and initially obscure the display from view. It is the thrill of the 'reveal' that catches first-time visitors by surprise. As they step through an archway cut through a hedge, they are overwhelmed by a sea of gold.

The site is perfect for daffodils. It's in full sun on neutral clay soil that is moist but not waterlogged. Because the conditions are ideal, the daffodils have never been divided or fed. Lindsey believes that the key to success is constant deadheading. This channels energy into the following year's growth and stops the dying flowers from detracting from the display. "We deadhead for a couple of hours a day, starting at the edges. Many of the daffodils are pooled together in cultivars and fade at the same time, so we can avoid walking on those that are still in flower," she explains. Maintenance is minimal. The grass is left to grow after flowering until the daffodil foliage has died down, then mown and raked off in midsummer.

When daffodil experts Ray Cobb, Alan Street of Avon Bulbs and Ron Scamp visited Felley Priory to name the cultivars, they identified 'Trewithen', 'Telamonius Plenus', 'Mrs RO Backhouse', 'WP Milner' and 'Beersheba'. The remainder were deemed to be natural hybrids, possibly related to 'Croesus', 'Lucifer', 'Bath's Flame' and 'Hospodar' or old cultivars whose names have been lost in the passage of time.

> *"The key to success is deadheading, which stores energy for the following year and stops dying flowers detracting from the display"*

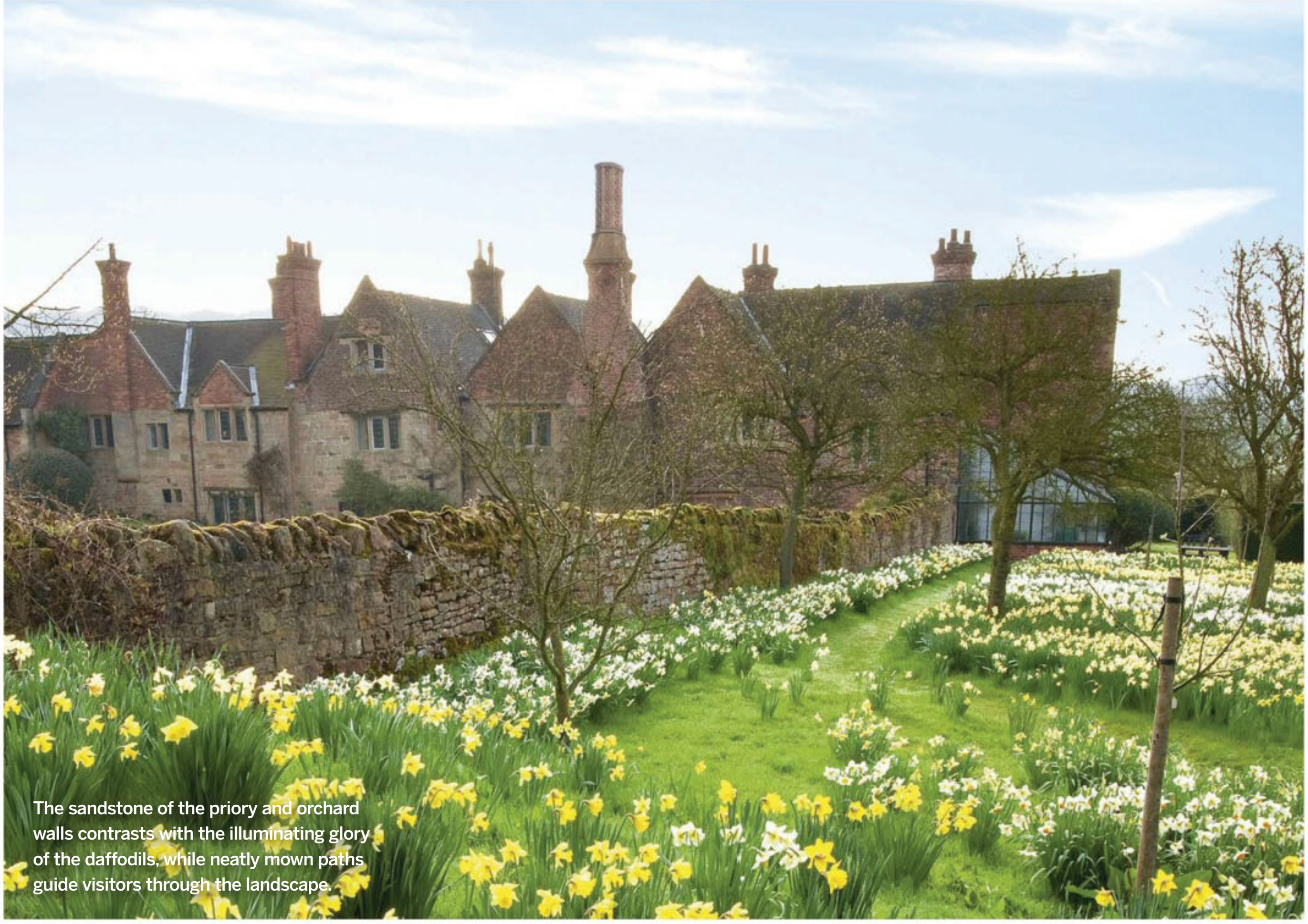
Lindsey is contemplating adding more cultivars and has based her choice on reputation. Most of the best cultivars for naturalising bloom mid-season from April to May. 'Carbineer', 'Fortune' and 'Kilworth', all dependable, sturdy cultivars that look like the traditional 'daffodil', are being considered for planting in the future. "When adding to the collection, we don't always buy new bulbs," says Lindsey. "There were some beautiful daffodils growing along the edge of a field that no one ever saw, so they were lifted and replanted among the display in the orchard."

The first daffodils appear in early March, and are at their peak in mid-April, sometimes continuing until the bluebell woods open in May. "There is a sense of anticipation in late February, when you start looking for signs of the first buds. Those in the sheltered microclimate by the yew hedge often appear first. It is such an inspiring, uplifting and exhilarating sight, people return year after year to see them." These are not the only emotions the daffodils engender. The three experts who came to identify the cultivars were spotted standing under an old pear tree, dabbing their eyes with their handkerchiefs, overwhelmed by the magnitude and beauty of the display. □

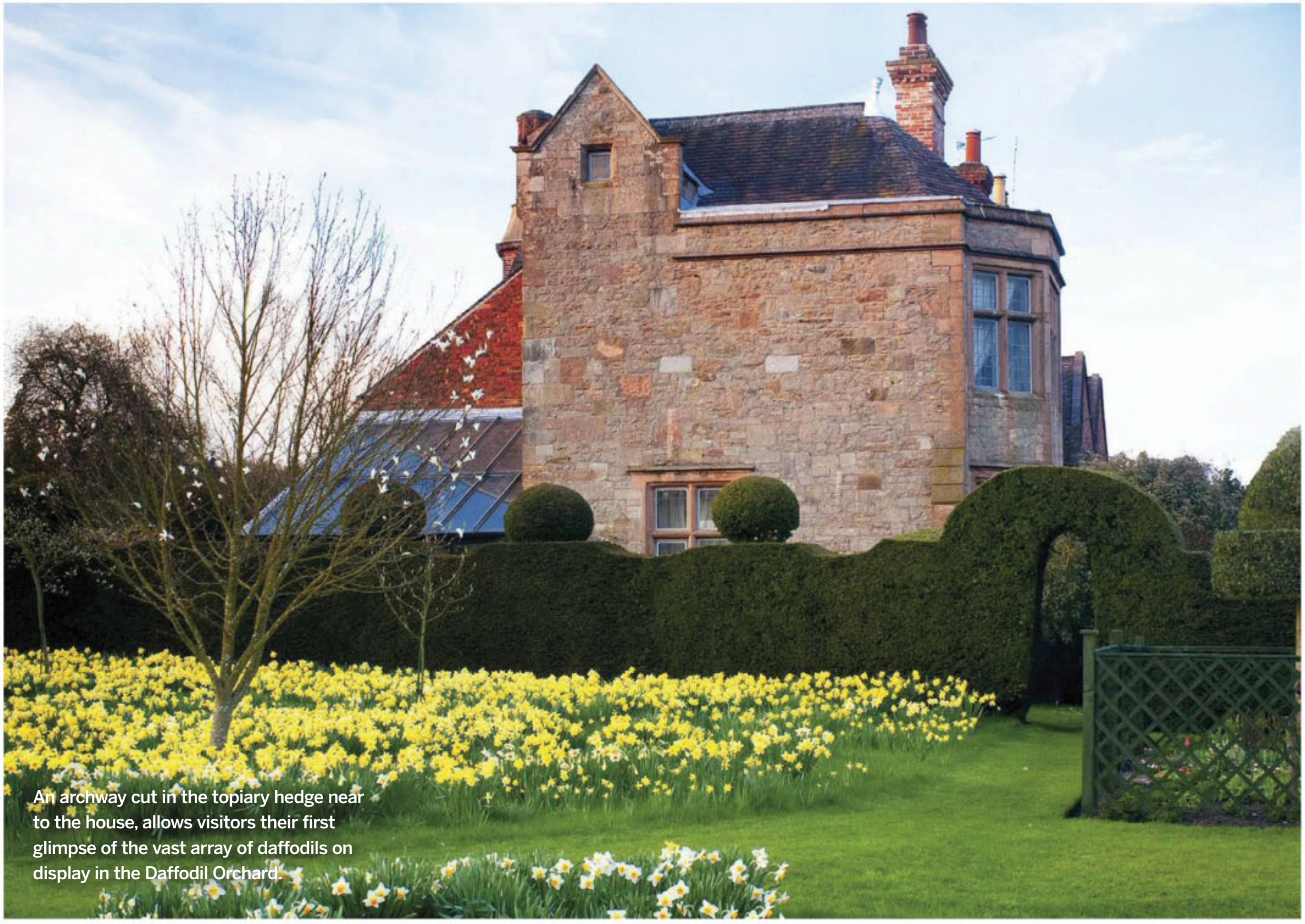
USEFUL INFORMATION

Address Felley Priory, Underwood, Nottinghamshire NG16 5FJ.
Tel 01773 810230.
Website felleypriory.co.uk
Email info@felleypriory.co.uk
Open Tuesday – Friday, 9am-4pm, and first and third Sunday of each month, 1 February – 4 October, 10am-4pm.
Opens for Daffodil Sunday 16 April 2017 as part of the National Gardens Scheme.

Turn the page for 12 daffodils great for naturalising ▷



The sandstone of the priory and orchard walls contrasts with the illuminating glory of the daffodils, while neatly mown paths guide visitors through the landscape.



An archway cut in the topiary hedge near to the house, allows visitors their first glimpse of the vast array of daffodils on display in the Daffodil Orchard.

12 great cultivars for naturalising

Head gardener Lindsey will only introduce new daffodils to Felley if they have a proven reputation. Many bloom from April to May.

1 *Narcissus* 'Fortune'
Dating from around 1917, this large daffodil has long-lasting, buttery-yellow flowers and a pale-orange trumpet. Early to mid-season. 45cm. RHS H6, USDA 3a-8b[†].

2 *N.* 'Kilworth'
A pre-1938 cultivar, the petals are creamy white and the cup deep orange, both yellow at the base. Mid- to late-season. 68cm. RHS H6, USDA 3a-8b.

3 *N.* 'Bath's Flame'
With a small, orange-rimmed cup and pale-yellow petals, this daffodil was bred by Rev GH Engleheart near Bath. Early to mid-season. 45cm. RHS H6, USDA 3a-8b.

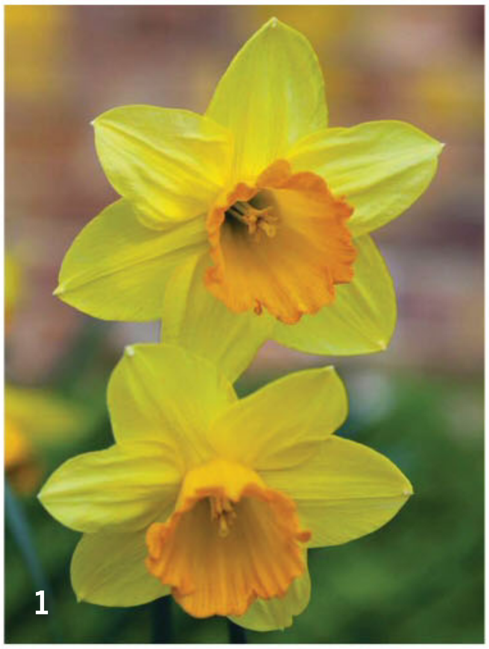
4 *N.* 'WP Milner'
Pre-1869. Breeder Henry Backhouse named this small cultivar, with dainty, nodding, creamy-white flowers, for his brother-in-law. Early to mid-season. 25cm. RHS H6, USDA 3a-8b.

5 *N.* 'Hospodar'
Raised by JC Williams at Caerhays, Cornwall, pre-1914. Large blooms with an orange cup and pale-yellow petals. Early to mid-season. 68cm. RHS H6, USDA 3a-8b.

6 *N.* 'Carbineer'
This tall, pre-1927 cultivar has a strong, stiff stem and beautifully poised, greenish-yellow flowers with an orange-red cup. Mid-season. Over 68cm tall. RHS H6, USDA 3a-8b.

7 *N.* 'Telamonius Plenus'
According to botanist John Parkinson, this was the original double daffodil, first flowered by a Flemish gardener, Van Sion, in 1620. Early to mid-season. 68cm. RHS H6, USDA 3a-8b.

8 *N.* 'Beersheba'
Pre-1923. According to the late bulb expert EA Bowles, this cultivar 'attracts the notice of all by its great size and glittering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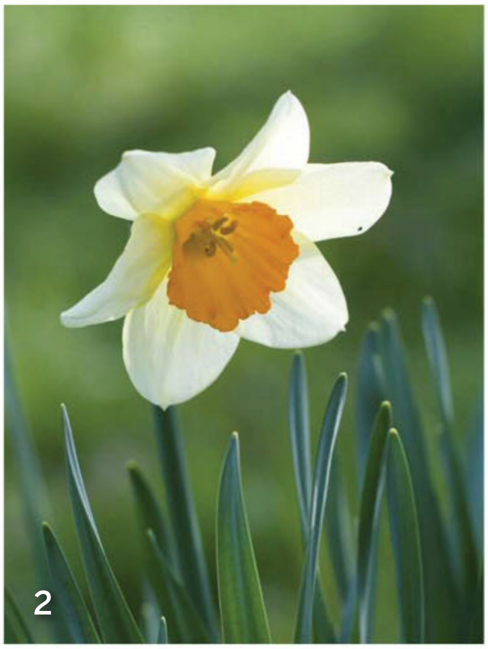
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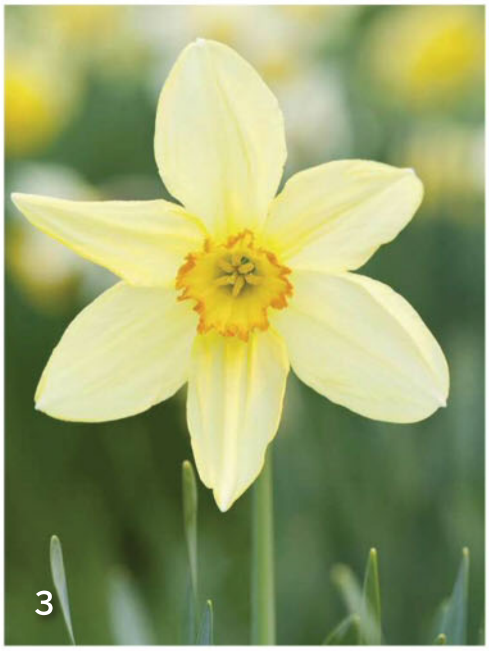
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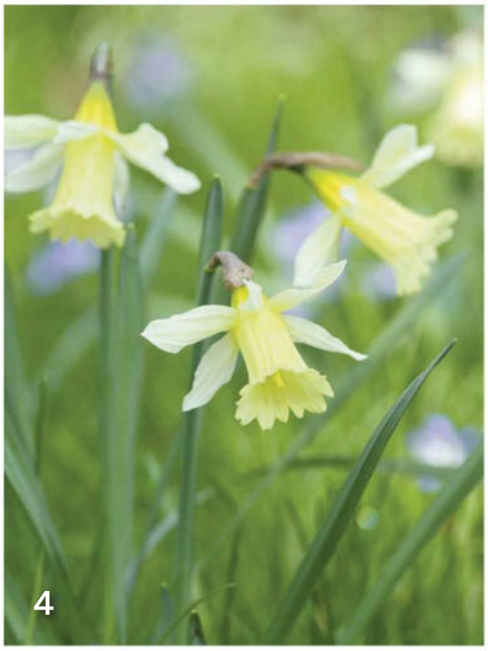
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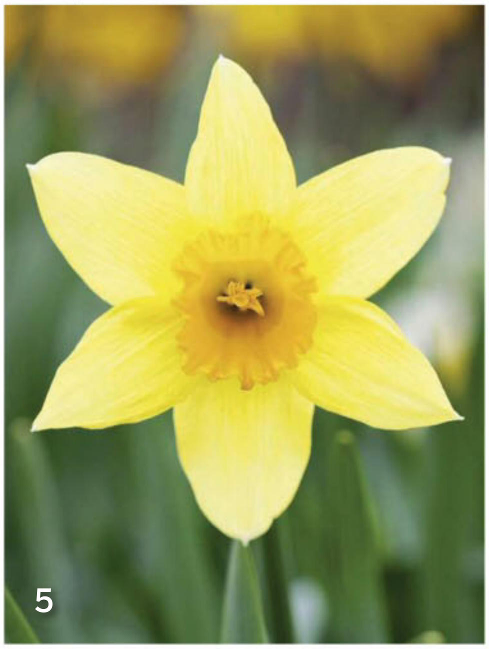
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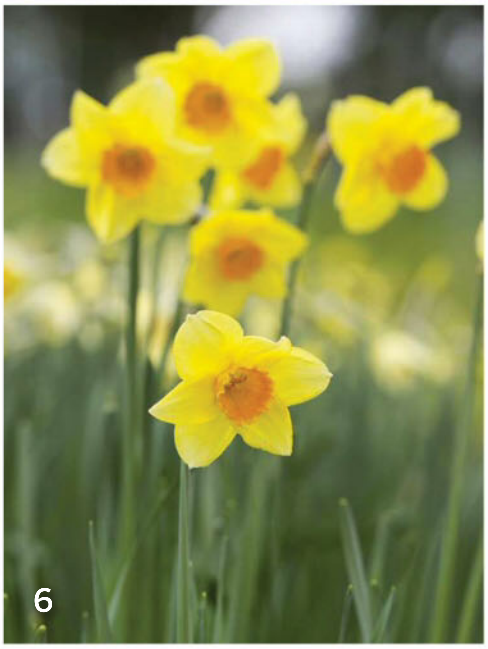
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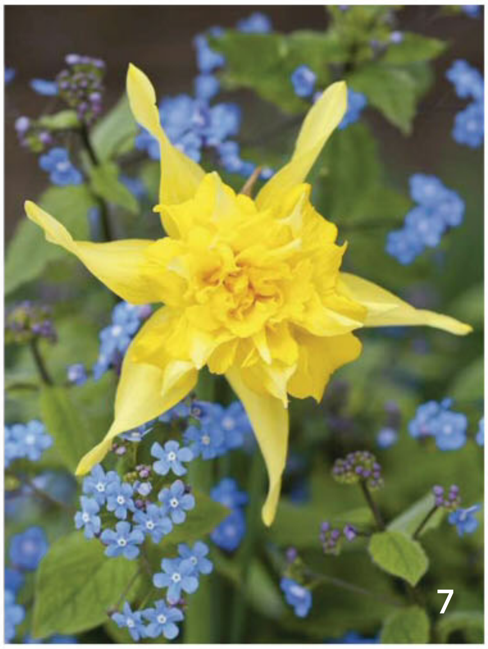
[†] Hardiness ratings given where available.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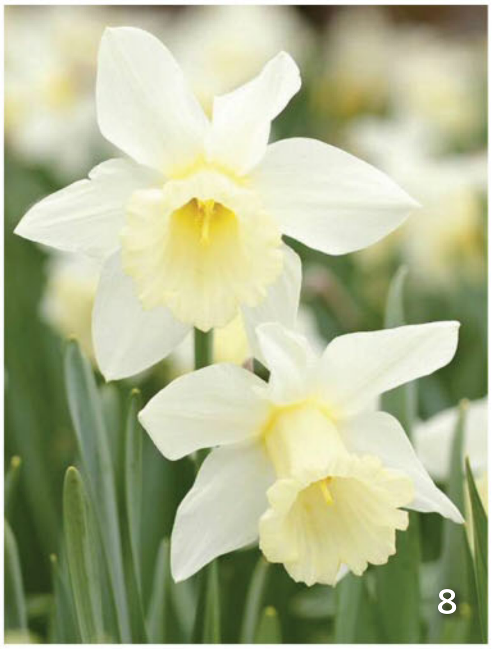
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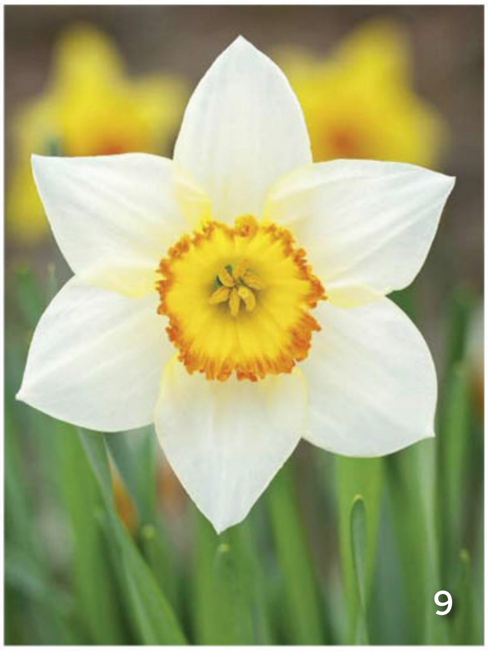
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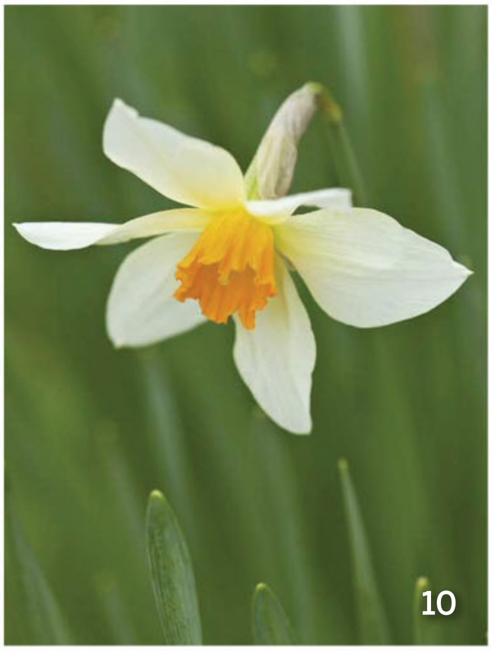
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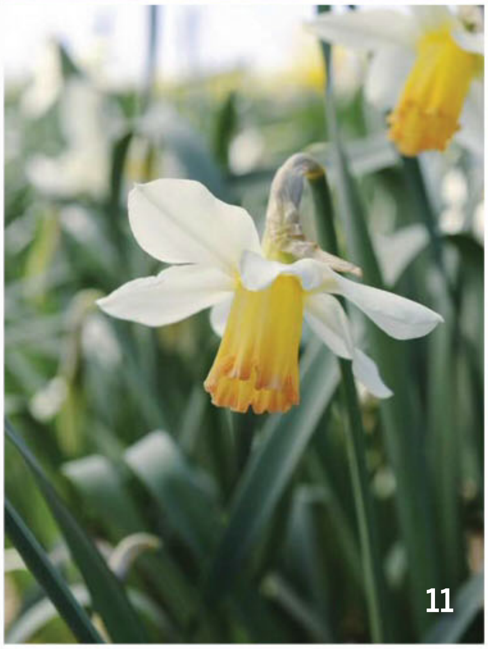
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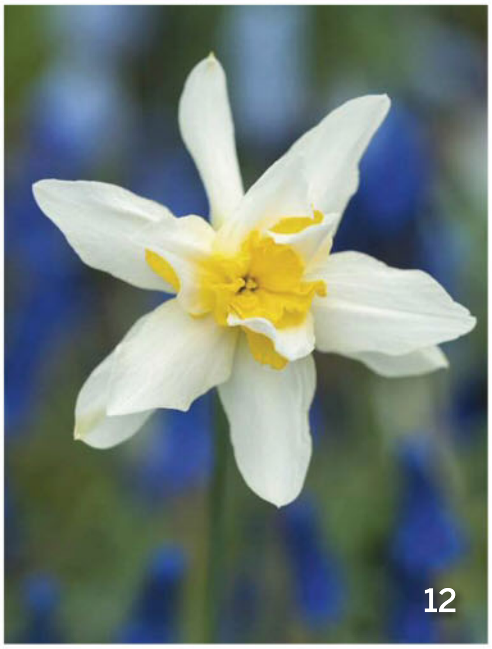
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1 & 11 JASON INGRAM; 2 JOANNA KOSSAK / GAP PHOTOS; 4 FIONA RICE / GAP PHOTOS; 6 TIM GAINEY / ALAMY STOCK PHOTO; 10 JO WHITWORTH / GAP PHOTOS

whiteness'. Early to mid-season. 68cm. RHS H6, USDA 3a-8b.

9 *N.* 'Croesus'
Another cultivar from JC Williams at Caerhays, with rounded, pale-yellow petals. The cup is orange becoming paler at the base. Mid-season. 68cm. RHS H6, USDA 3a-8b.

10 *N.* 'Lucifer'
Raised pre-1890 in Ireland, this daffodil has white petals and a rich-orange centre, fading to pale yellow at the base of the cup. Mid- to late-season. 68cm. RHS H6, USDA 3a-8b.

11 *N.* 'Mrs RO Backhouse'
The first of the 'pink' daffodils with white petals was named by breeder Robert Backhouse in memory of his wife. The cup is pale apricot-pink, deeper at the rim. Mid- to late-season. 68cm. RHS H6, USDA 3a-8b.

12 *N.* 'Sulphur Phoenix'
A pre-1820 cultivar producing large, two-tone, double flowers of bright lemon and pale cream with good weather resistance. Early to mid-season. 45cm. RHS H6, USDA 3a-8b.

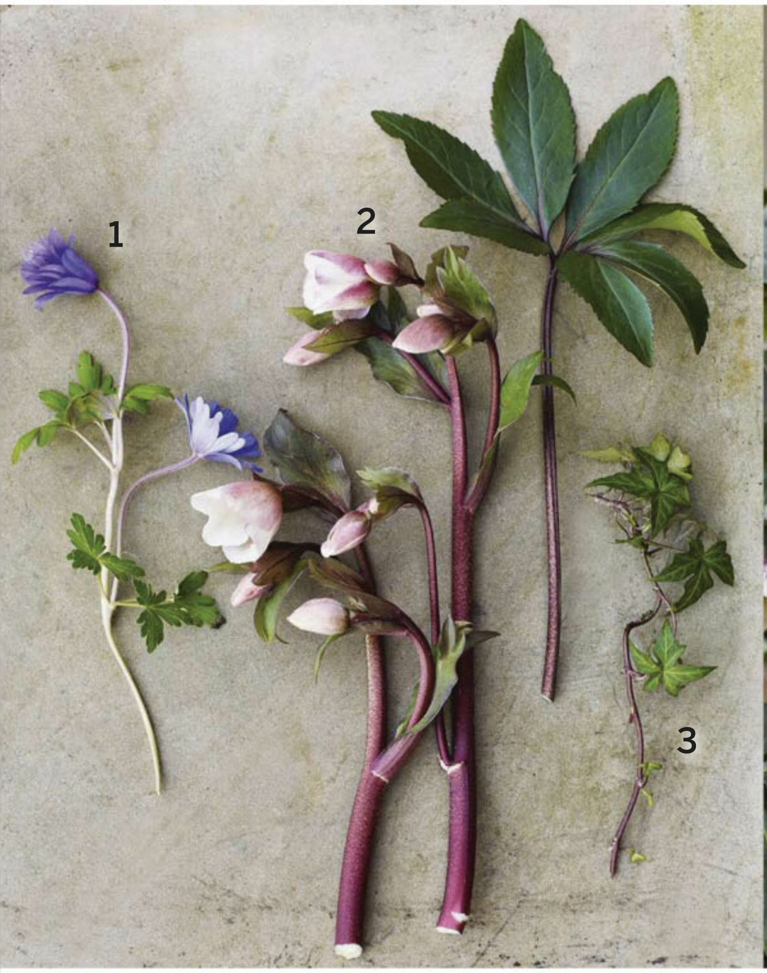
WHERE TO BUY

- **Avon Bulbs**
  Burnt House Farm, Mid Lambrook,
  South Petherton, Somerset TA13 5HE.
  Tel 01460 242177, avonbulbs.co.uk
- **Jacques Amand International**
  The Nurseries, Clamp Hill, Stanmore,
  Middlesex HA7 3JS.
  Tel 020 8420 7110,
  jaquesarmandintl.com
- **P de Jager & Sons Limited**
  Church Farm, Ulcombe, Maidstone,
  Kent ME17 1DN.
  Tel 01622 840229, dejager.co.uk
- **RA Scamp**
  49 Mongleath Road, Falmouth,
  Cornwall TR11 4PN.
  Tel 07826 067175, qualitydaffodils.com

Pots of style

In the first of a new series, gardener Thomas Unterdorfer creates elegant container displays that combine the sights and scent of spring with a longevity that will free you up for other seasonal gardening tasks

WORDS **THOMAS UNTERDORFER** PHOTOGRAPHS **ANDREW MONTGOMERY**



Ringing in spring

Helleborus x *sahinii* 'Winterbells' inspired this design, based on reminders of winter and heralds of spring. It flowers for several months and performs as well in a shady border as it does in pots. It feels moody and dark, and with the winter colouring of the ivy, fits perfectly in the old cauldron. Anemones are the epitome of spring and the dainty blue form of *Anemone blanda* lifts the colour and texture of the scheme while keeping it deep and dusky.

How to achieve the look

Colours and shapes

The hellebore displays a beautiful spectrum of colours in its bell-shaped flowers as well as the stems and leaves. I love the way it contrasts with the blue of the anemones. The purple stems and veined leaves also go well with the darker markings of the ivy, which leads down to the rusty pattern of the iron pot. The anemones lighten the feel and structure of the display, making it more interesting and acutely seasonal. You could also use white anemones, but I think the blue adds more depth.

Container, cultivation and care

I found this cauldron buried in a border when tidying a friend's garden years ago and love the colour, the streaks of rust and especially the shape. Hellebores do not like to be too wet, so drainage is very important. I drilled six drainage holes of about 5mm in diameter and covered with terracotta crocks and grit, but you could also use gravel to ensure good drainage. The compost is an equal mixture of John Innes No 2 and multi-purpose compost to keep the plants moist but well drained. This pot requires little maintenance, apart from watering, and I usually take off any flowers that have gone over and remove yellow leaves, especially as the anemones become dormant. I am sure this display would work well for another season, and if the ivy gets too dominant, just use a pair of sharp secateurs to keep it in check.

Plants (see above left)

1 *Anemone blanda*

This anemone comes in a natural variation of blue, pink and white. It does well in the garden, likes the sun in spring and prefers moist but free-draining soil, ideally under shrubs or in a woodland position. February – March. 15cm. AGM*. RHS H6, USDA 5a-8b†.

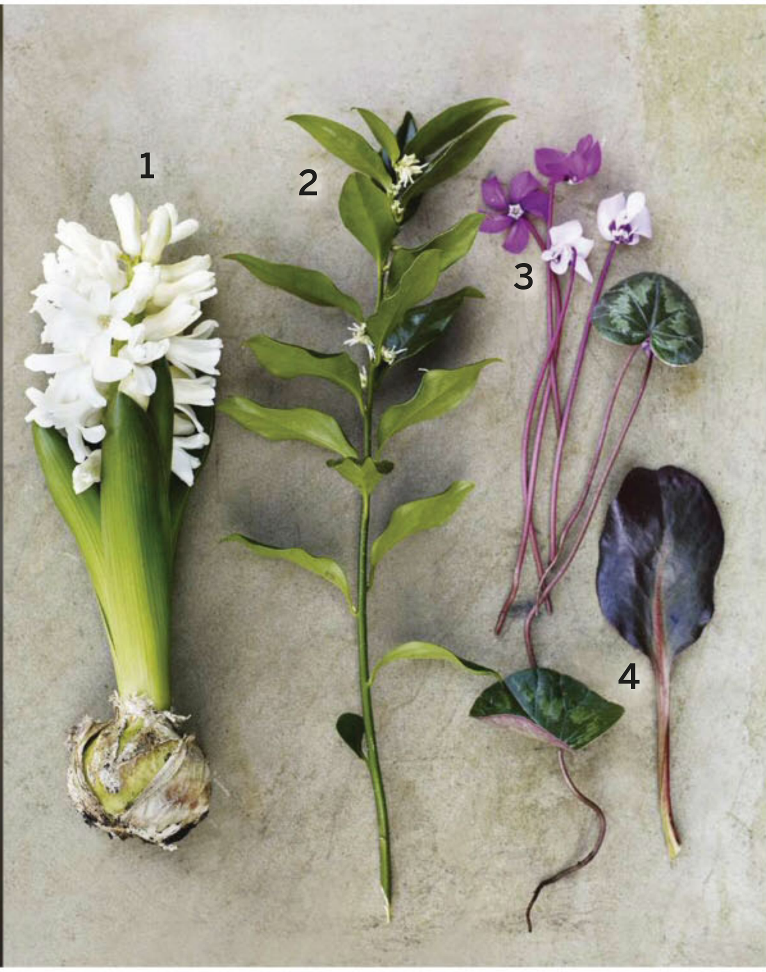
2 *Helleborus* x *sahinii* 'Winterbells'

Named after Kees Sahin, in honour of the founder of the Dutch seed company where it was raised. January – April. 40-50cm. USDA 4a-9b.

3 *Hedera helix*

Being evergreen, small-leaved cultivars are invaluable for pots in winter. Ivy is easily propagated by cuttings and the size can be restricted by pruning. 2m. RHS H5, USDA 4a-9b.

*Holds an Award of Garden Merit from the Royal Horticultural Society. †Hardiness ratings given where available.



Heaven scent

Being greeted by a cloud of fragrance when you open the front door is a great start to the day. The perfume emanating from this arrangement will welcome me for weeks and the flowers will last equally long. This pot captures some of my favourite scents of early spring, while the strong green of the *Sarcococca confusa*, the marbled leaves of cyclamen and the purple of the *Bergenia cordifolia* look great just outside the door. White, pink and purple flowers lift the arrangement and together create a strong planting scheme.

How to achieve the look

Colours and shapes

The dark leaves of *Sarcococca confusa* work well as a backdrop in floral arrangements. The scent of the flowers is an added bonus. Cyclamen provide an attractive contrast, with their exquisite flowers and grey-patterned leaves. You can really appreciate them close up in a pot. Hyacinths are the temporary stars of this planting scheme. I started them in pots, so they are all at different stages of flowering, which leads to a more natural look and prolongs flowering. *Bergenia cordifolia* 'Overture' is one of the best plants for dark-red leaves in winter. It provides contrast in terms of shape, and the colour has a calming, complementary effect on the arrangement. Later in spring, magenta flowers appear on tall, scarlet stems.

Container, cultivation and care

This simple terracotta pot had been whitewashed and used repeatedly in the garden. The pattern of algae on the paint mirrors the leaves of the cyclamen and contrasts with the other plants. As there is only one hole in the pot, I used a generous layer of terracotta crocks and grit for drainage and a mixture of John Innes No 2 and multi-purpose compost with additional grit. This combination also looks good without flowers and should last for another season, given some watering and a liquid feed.

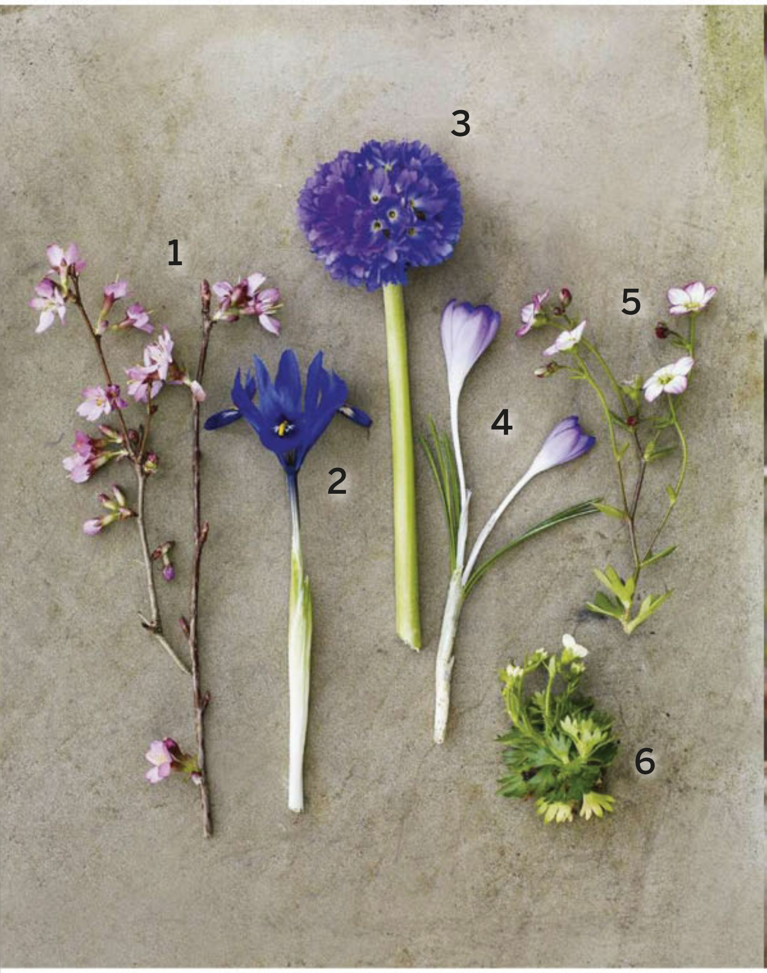
Plants (see above)

1 *Hyacinthus orientalis* 'Fairy White'
I usually pot some bulbs and move them into the greenhouse to use them earlier and over a longer period. March. 20-30cm. USDA 4a-8b.

2 *Sarcococca confusa*
Evergreen shrub with tiny, fragrant, white flowers. Can be kept shorter by pruning. December – March. 2m. AGM. RHS H5, USDA 6a-9b.

3 *Cyclamen coum*
A jewel in any garden with delicate flowers in purple, pink and white. It can be drier in summer, so planting under hedges or shrubs is ideal. February – March. 10cm. AGM. RHS H5, USDA 6a-9b.

4 *Bergenia cordifolia* 'Overture'
A very attractive cultivar with magenta flowers on tall stems. I also enjoy using them as cut flowers. March – April. 20-30cm. RHS H7, USDA 3a-8b.



Potted gems

With so many plants flowering in the garden in spring, it's easy to miss some. I grow a range of plants in pots and arrange them on a metal table in the yard to remind us of what we have and how beautiful the flowers are close up. It also reminds me of my training at Kew, where a myriad alpines are grown in pots to perfection and displayed in the Alpine House. Sometimes I grow them in plastic pots and transfer them into terracotta ones for the display.

How to achieve the look

Colours and shapes
Prunus 'Okamé', a cross between *P. incisa* and *P. campanulata*, is the centre plant in this display and sets the colour with its carmine pink flowers. *Iris reticulata* 'Harmony' is easy to grow in pots, where you can appreciate its faint scent. I always grow a few *Crocus tommasinianus* in pots every year, not just for the name, but also for its perfect flowers. *Primula denticulata* 'Corolla Blue', the drumstick primula, looks great in a pot, but also makes a big impression in the garden. For a softer texture, I have added two *Saxifraga* x *arendsii*, namely 'Alpino Early Pink' and 'Touran Lime Green'. Both work really well in pots and flower for a long time. Lastly, there is a pot of *Cyclamen coum*, again to add more structure and a strong pink colour.

Pots, cultivation and care
Old terracotta pots are not only pleasing to look at, but also great to grow plants in. Using some gravel to cover the soil settles the plants optically and I use local gravel, so it ties in with the walls in the background. I always make sure the drainage is good and mix the soil individually for each plant, although most grow well in an equal mixture of John Innes No 2 and multi-purpose compost with extra grit for drainage. Plants grown in pots benefit from liquid food added to the watering can, especially if they stay in the pot for a long time.

Plants (see above left)

1 *Prunus* 'Okamé'
Will grow for a few seasons in a pot, but even better in the garden, where it will develop into a small tree. March – April. 3-5m. AGM. USDA 6a-8b.

2 *Iris reticulata* 'Harmony'
After use can be planted out in well-drained soil. February – March. 10-15cm. RHS H7, USDA 5a-9b.

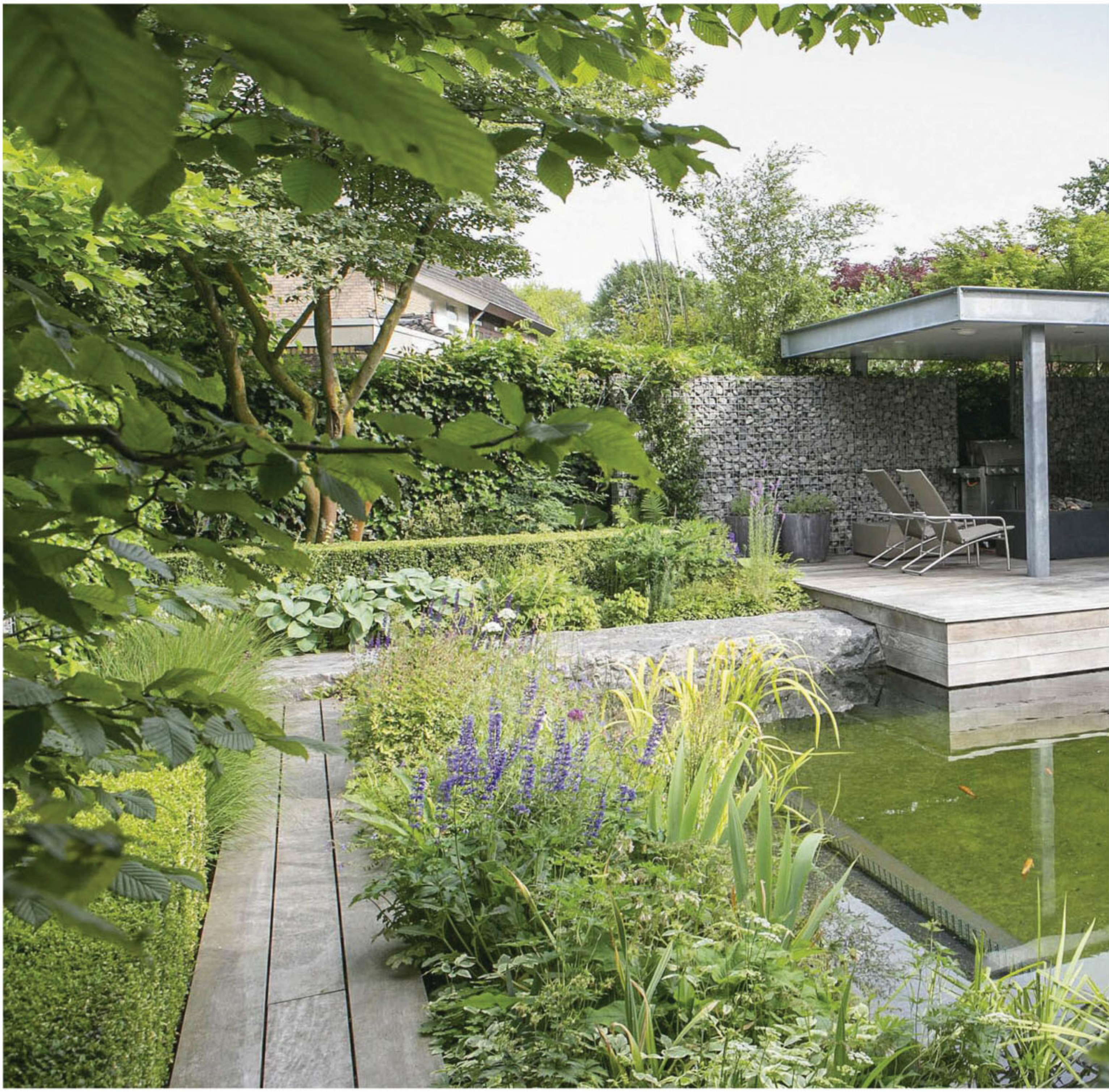
3 *Primula denticulata* 'Corolla Blue'
One of the easier ones to grow. Keep it moist at all times. March – April. 20-30cm. AGM. RHS H6.

4 *Crocus tommasinianus*
Great to naturalise in grass and even self-seeds. February – March. 10cm. AGM. RHS H6, USDA 3a-8b.

5 *Saxifraga* x *arendsii* 'Alpino Early Pink', and

6 *S.* x *arendsii* 'Touran Lime Green'
Lovely evergreen mounds. March to late summer. 10-15cm. USDA 5a-7b.

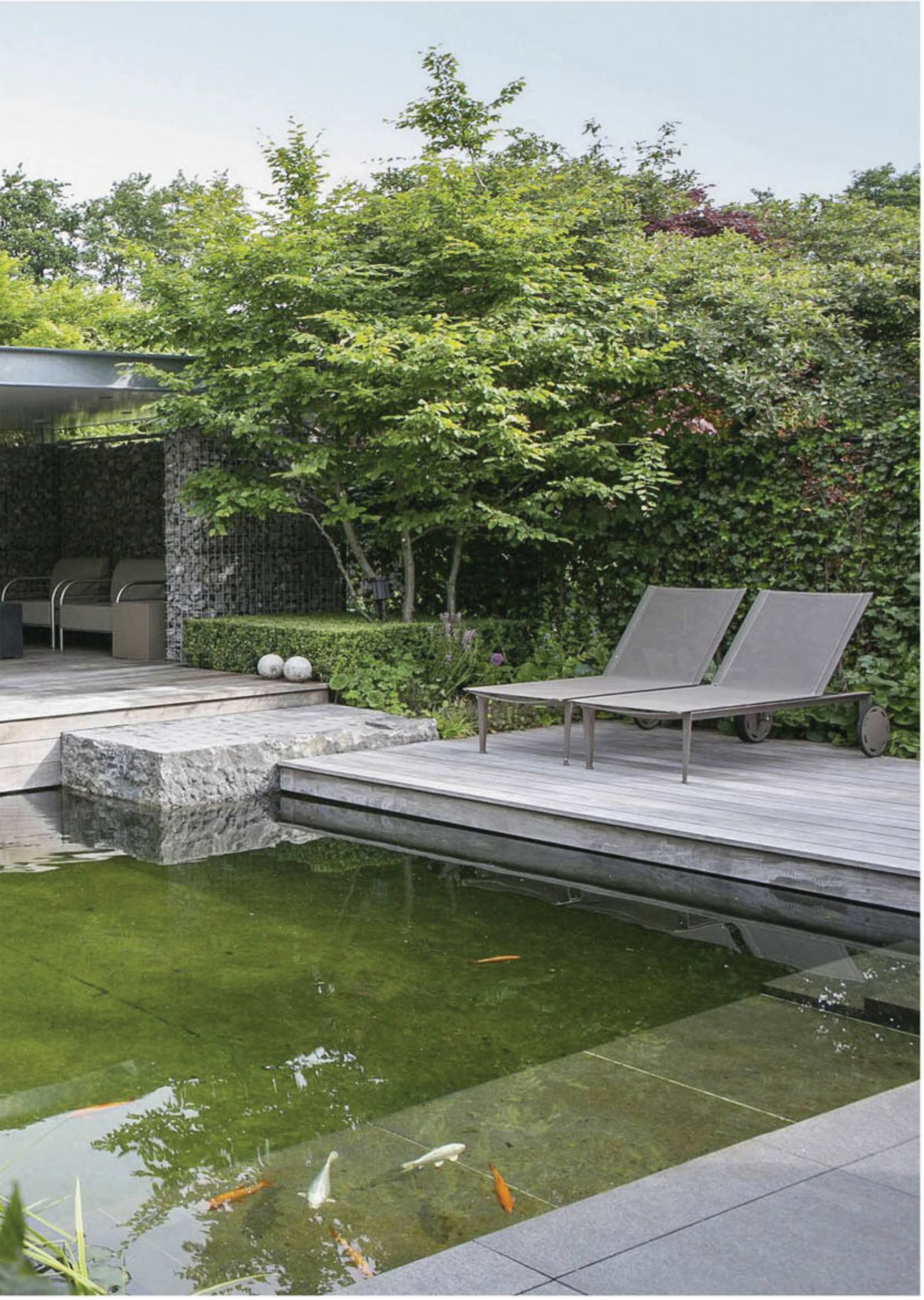
***Cyclamen coum* (not shown)**
See page 48.



Liquid asset

If you thought your garden was too small for a natural swimming pond, think again. In his contemporary suburban garden, designer Raoul Hagenbeek has made room for a pond without compromising on style

WORDS MARIEKE VAN GESSEL PHOTOGRAPHS MODESTE HERWIG / GAP PHOTOS



In brief

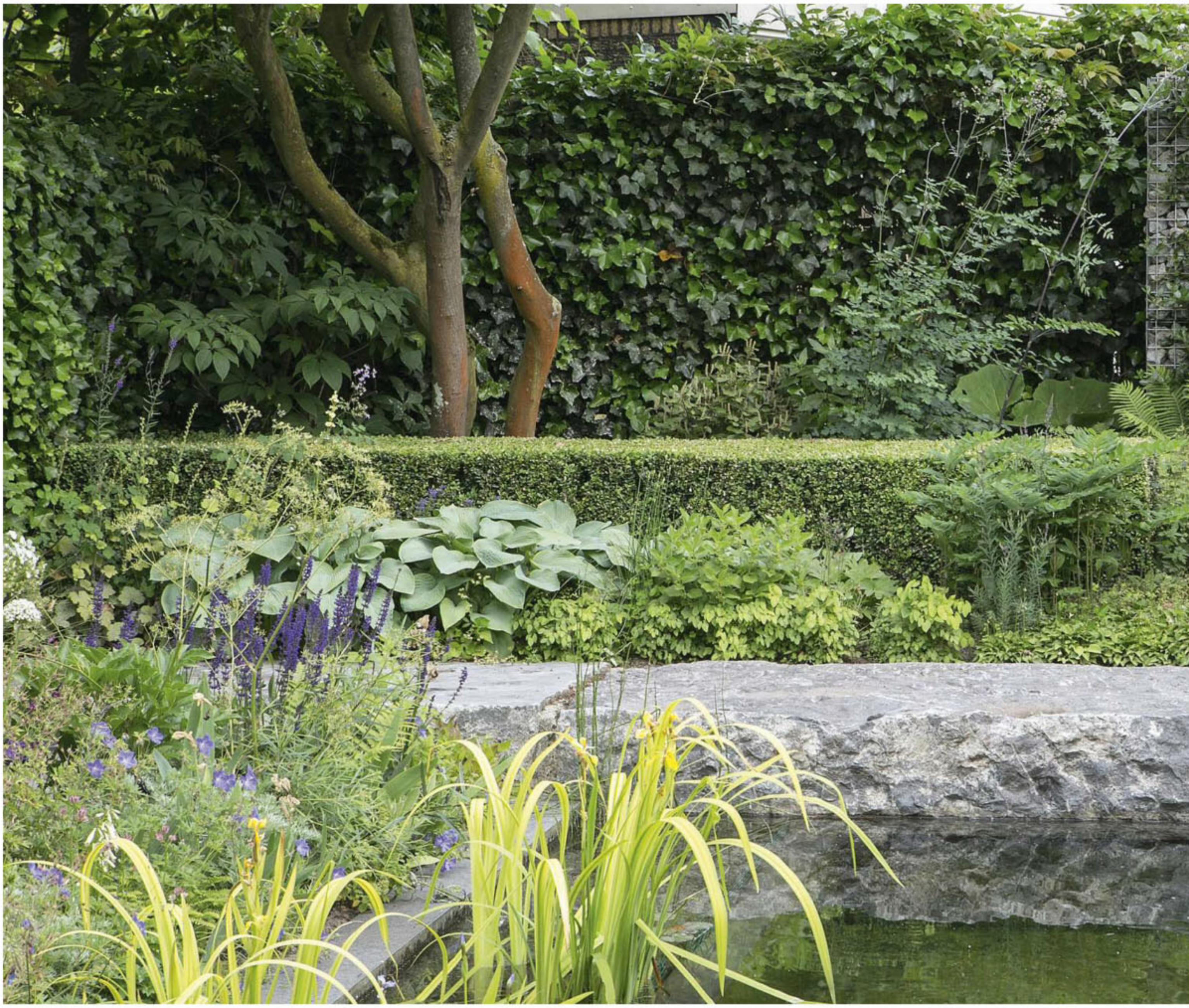
What Modern suburban garden with swimming pond and lush contemporary planting.
Where Vught, the Netherlands.
Size 195 square metres.
Soil Sandy.
Climate Temperate maritime.
Hardiness rating USDA 8.

Although it's small, the garden of designer Raoul Hagenbeek combines separate areas for sitting and dining with elegant planting and a pond that is home all year to golden orfes and koi carp. In summer, thanks to natural filtration, the pond is also used for swimming.

Designing a small garden can be hard enough at the best of times but when the garden in question is a mere 15 x 13m and you're also determined to fit in a swimming pond, creating something exceptional could for many people seem like a challenge too far. Not so for designer Raoul Hagenbeek, co-owner of the Dutch garden landscape and garden design company Puur Groen [Pure Green].

Eleven years ago Raoul and his family moved into a modern, semi-detached house in the quiet Dutch town of Vught, which came with a small and unexceptional plot. "The previous owners had packed the garden with plants, but it looked quite messy," recalls Raoul. "It was in desperate need of structure and focal points."

High on the family's wish list were outside areas suitable for relaxing and dining, but Raoul also wanted a pond. "I grew up in a *polder* [low-lying land enclosed by dykes that is typical of many parts of the Netherlands] with lots of water and loved to go fishing and sailing when I was young," he says. "When our two teenage sons realised it was possible to have a pond you could also swim in, the decision was made." Today a large rectangular swimming ▷

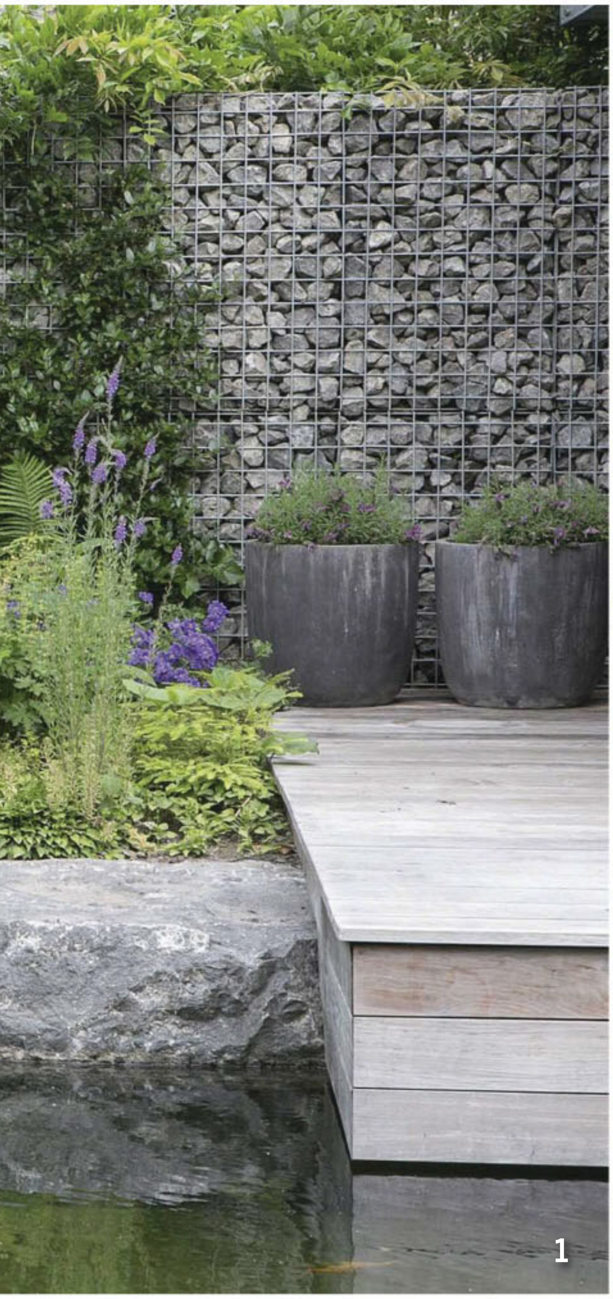


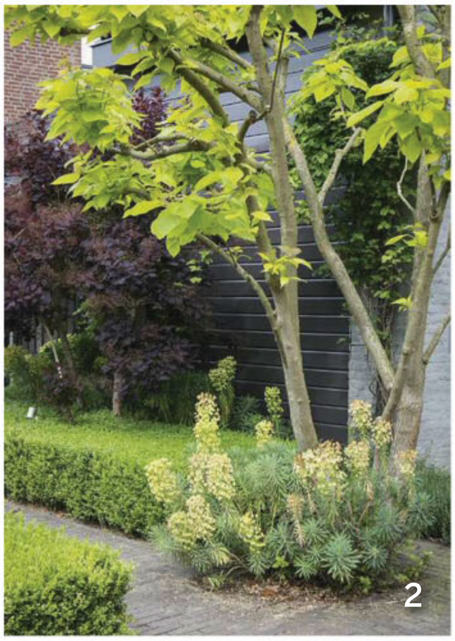
A low box hedge provides green structure throughout the year, while an Amelanchier lamarckii *tree offers seasonal interest, with white flowers in spring and rich leaf colour in autumn*

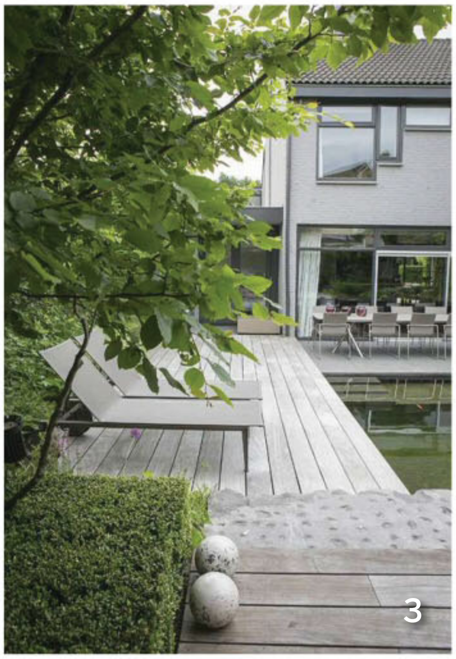
▷ pond sits in the centre of the garden, surrounded by large slabs of grey stone, which have been reclaimed from an Antwerp quay, and a sun terrace made from ipe wood decking. "I've chosen a simple geometric design that matches the architecture of the house and creates a relaxed ambience," says Raoul.

The house itself was built just 25 years ago, but to give it an even more modern appearance, the family painted its traditional red bricks and framework in several different shades of grey. They also installed large sliding doors at the back to connect the house with the garden. These lead out on to a dining terrace, overlooking the pond, which faces a covered seating pavilion. Raoul has placed each distinct area, and the connecting walkways, on different levels to create a feeling of space. Lush planting in the borders – featuring a mix of *Salvia* x *sylvestris* 'Mainacht', *Hosta sieboldiana* var. *elegans*, various geraniums and ornamental grasses – adds to this optical illusion, as does the limited colour palette, with the grey of the ipe wood and stone helping to link house and garden and brightening the green planting.

The grey theme continues in the 2m-high, stone-filled gabions that mark the garden's boundaries providing privacy and support for more greenery in the form of *Hedera hibernica*. In front of the gabions Raoul has planted a low box hedge to provide a green ▷







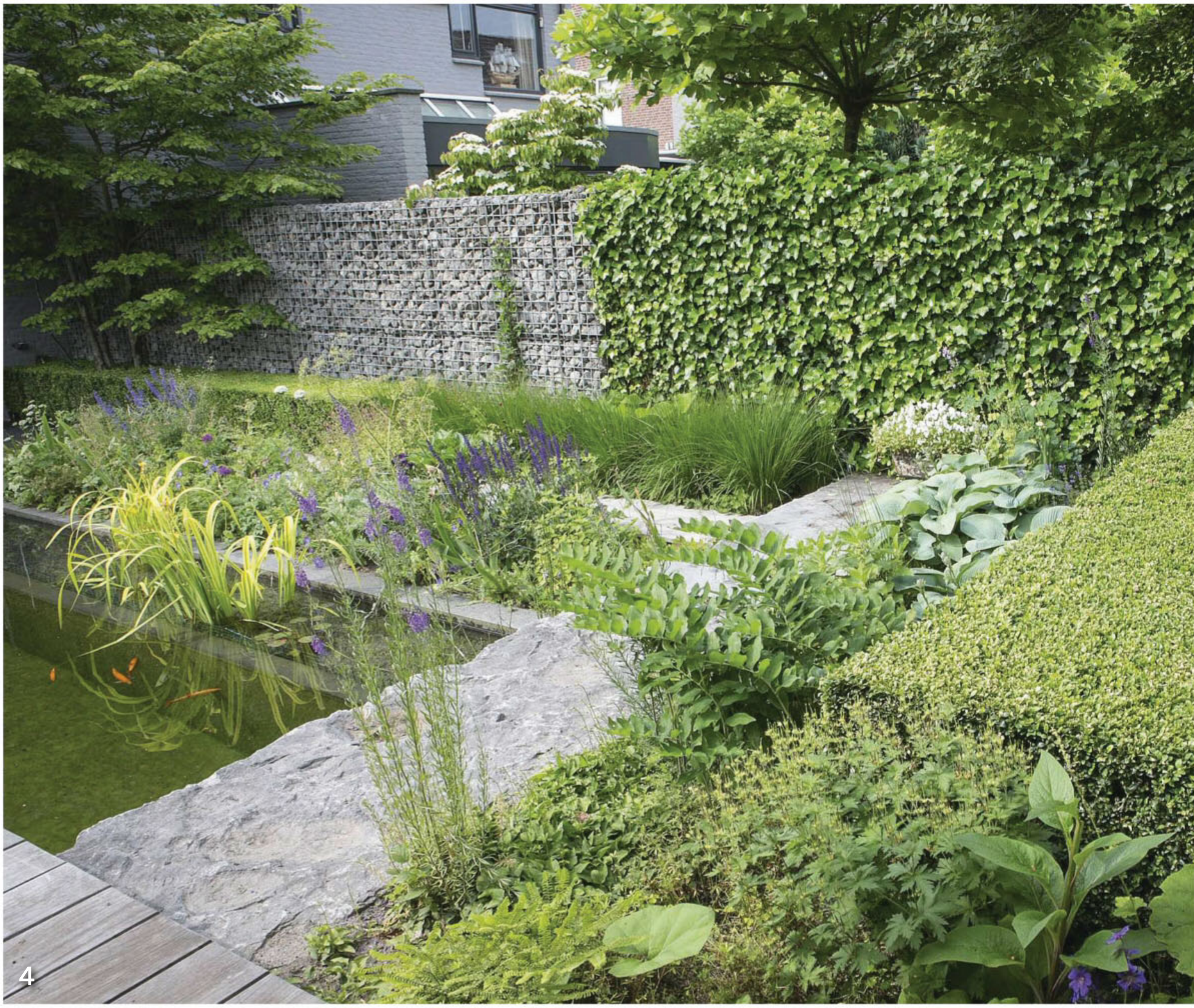
1 The reed-like leaves of *Iris pseudacorus* help soften the edges of the pond. This marginal plant provides a rare splash of yellow in a garden that uses predominantly whites, blues and purples, including *Salvia* x *sylvestris* 'Mainacht' on the left. In a shady corner, a multi-stemmed *Amelanchier lamarckii* creates a focal point. Beneath it, lush planting mixes broad-leaved plants, such as *Hosta sieboldiana* var. *elegans*, with the delicate leaves of *Epimedium* x *youngianum* 'Niveum' to give a more spacious feel.

2 Next to the house, the purple leaves of *Cotinus coggygria* 'Royal Purple' work well against the dark grey of the brick wall and contrast nicely with the low-growing *Buxus semperivrens* hedge. A mass of Mediterranean spurge, *Euphorbia characias* subsp. *wulfenii*, planted around the foot of a golden Indian bean tree, *Catalpa bignonioides* 'Aurea', creates a second focal point for this corner.

3 Ipe wood decking has a similar grey sheen to the house and stone slabs. The wood's smooth surface contrasts wonderfully with the irregular patterns on the stone slabs and laying the planks in different directions helps to make the garden look bigger.

Raoul's tips for making a small garden seem bigger

- Choose clear, simple lines and don't add too many different materials or colours, otherwise the garden will appear cluttered and cramped.
- Include some large-scale design features, such as a water surface. Contrary to intuition, this creates an illusion of more space.
- Introduce a few well-placed eye-catchers or focal points, such as a pond, a multi-stemmed tree or a garden ornament. These draw your attention, so you're not immediately made aware of the size of the garden.
- Position areas of hard landscaping on different levels. This not only makes the space feel bigger, but by being able to experience the garden from different perspectives, it can feel more interesting and varied.
- Lush planting on the boundaries will help enhance the sense of space. Evergreen plants, such as box and ivy, create structure and interest throughout the year. Small trees and multi-stemmed shrubs add height and depth.
- Consider sharing part of your garden with your neighbours, as Raoul has done at the front of his house. Obviously, this works best if your houses' architecture – and your taste in garden style – are similar. And you get on well.



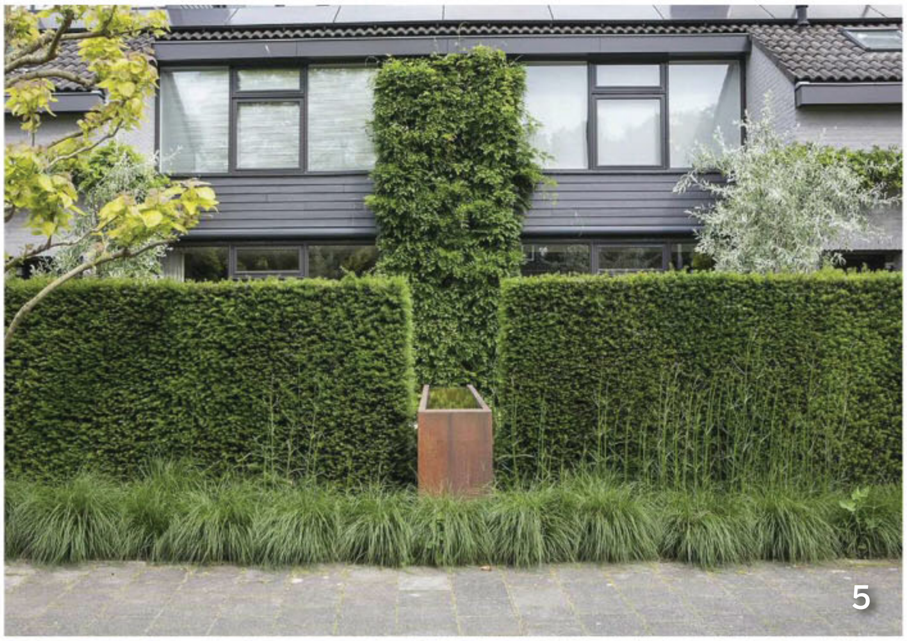
Lush planting in the borders creates a feeling of space as does the limited colour palette, with the grey of the ipe wood and stone helping to link house and garden

▷ structure throughout the year, and multi-stemmed hornbeams *Carpinus betulus*. An *Amelanchier lamarckii* tree offers seasonal interest, with white flowers in spring and a display of rich leaf colour in autumn. In a small border next to the house Raoul experiments with new or unusual plants to see how they perform.

Some of his current favourites are *Silene fimbriata*, *Aegopodium podagraria* 'Variegatum', *Iris* 'Black Knight' and *Epimedium* x *youngianum* 'Niveum'. Here, and throughout the garden, Raoul uses a limited colour palette of blue, white and purple, and avoids yellow, with one or two exceptions, including *Iris pseudacorus* in the pond and *Alchemilla mollis* at the front of the house. Both front and rear gardens require minimum maintenance; the borders are so packed with plants and grasses that little weeding is needed. "In summer I deadhead flowers," says Raoul. "I clip the box hedging a few times a year and the hornbeams only need an occasional prune." All of which means that come summer Raoul and family are free to relax and enjoy both their garden and their pond. □

USEFUL INFORMATION

Find out more about Raoul's work and his company Puur Groen.
Tel +31 (0)411 63 50 50, puurgroen.nl



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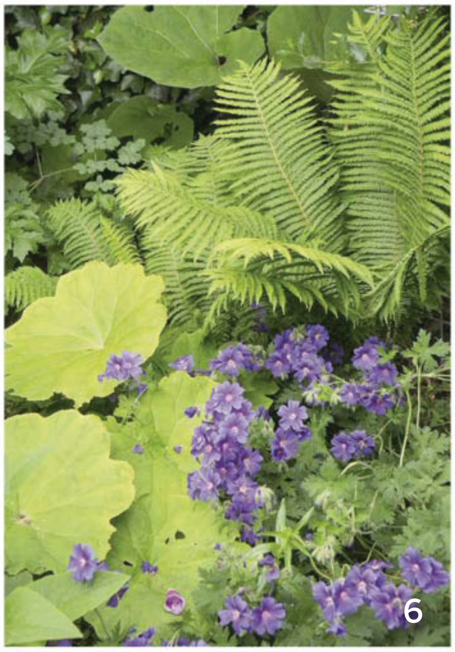

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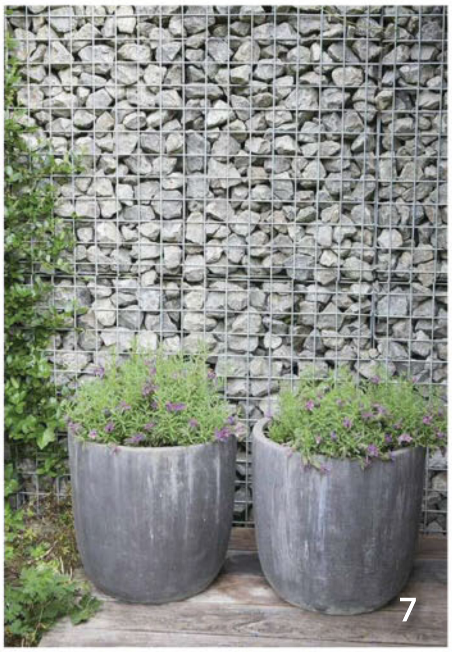

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4 By using a limited colour palette for both his hard landscaping and planting, Raoul has created a contemporary looking garden that feels much larger than it is and into which the swimming pond sits easily without dominating the space.

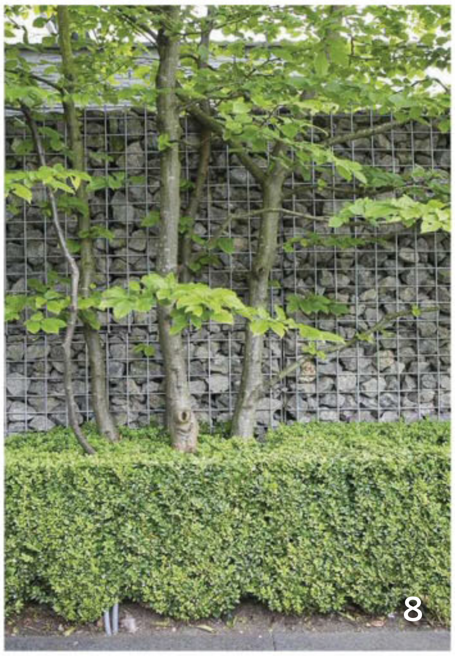
5 Tall yew hedges provide privacy at the front of the house and create a striking feature. The gap between them reveals a rectangle of *Wisteria sinensis* 'Prolific' growing up the house. A golden-leaved *Catalpa bignonioides* 'Aurea' and a silver-leaved *Pyrus salicifolia* 'Pendula', provide contrast, while the grass *Pennisetum alopecuroides* 'Hameln' softens the hedge at street level.

6 In a shady corner, Raoul has combined the rounded leaves of *Astilboides tabularis* with the heart-shaped leaves of *Petasitus hybridus* and the lady-fern *Athyrium filix-femina*. The deep-purple flowers of *Geranium* 'Orion' add colour.

7 At the edge of the covered pavilion – the family's favourite area – two concrete pots, filled with *Lavandula stoechas*, add interest and blend beautifully with the rest of the hard landscaping.

8 A multi-stemmed *Carpinus betulus* breaks up the neatly clipped *Buxus sempervirens* low hedge. The stone-filled gabions are made from galvanised steel wire held in place by galvanised steel pipes at one-metre intervals.

9 Raoul shares his front garden and driveway with his neighbours to create one large, unified space. The drive is linked to the street by a 3m-long water feature made of Corten steel, which sits amid a mass of *Alchemilla mollis* and *Iris* 'Blue King'.



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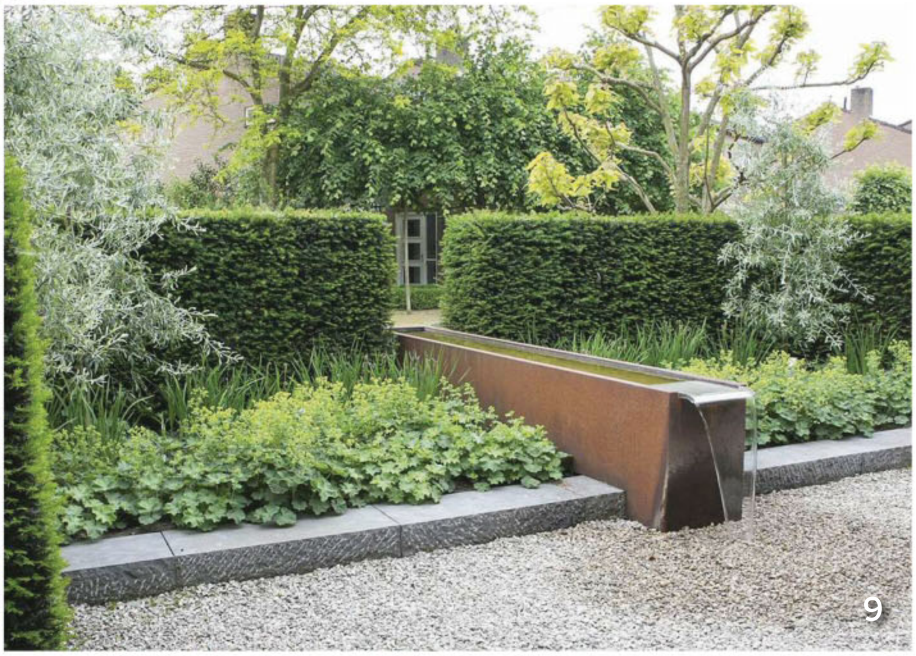

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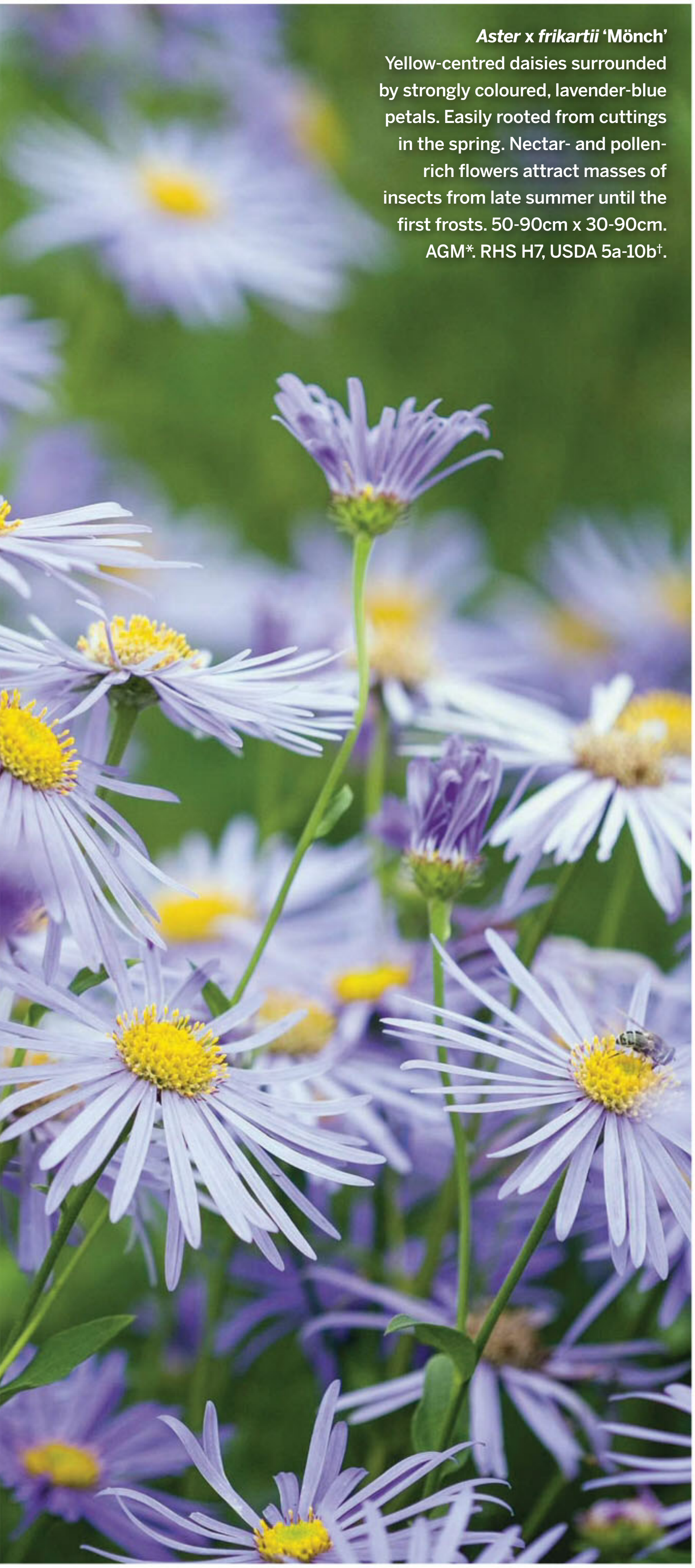
In brief

What A selection of garden-worthy plants that are easy to propagate by seed or division, and which can generally withstand the worst that winter can throw at them.
Origins Varied.
Season From early spring to late autumn.
Size Ranging from 30cm to 2.5m.
Conditions Reasonable, well-drained soil in sun or dappled shade.

Fail-safe borders

Whether you're an old hand or new to gardening, giving your borders a strong backbone of easy-to-grow plants that will survive where many others fail, ensures a long season of colour and gives you space to experiment

WORDS **TOM ATTWOOD**



***Aster* x *frikartii* 'Mönch'**
Yellow-centred daisies surrounded by strongly coloured, lavender-blue petals. Easily rooted from cuttings in the spring. Nectar- and pollen-rich flowers attract masses of insects from late summer until the first frosts. 50-90cm x 30-90cm. AGM*. RHS H7, USDA 5a-10b†.

CLIVE NICHOLS / GAP PHOTOS

Tom Attwood is a Kew-trained gardener, lecturer and writer who, with his wife Abi, runs the nursery and garden design consultancy Abi and Tom's Garden Plants in Cumbria.

Ten years ago I began work on a garden that sits at the head of a rain-drenched valley in the Lake District. Here, winters are less than forgiving and for a perennial to flourish, or at the very least survive, it needs abundant resilience. The early planting experiments I made – sometimes fruitful, sometimes not – engendered in me a deep respect for many of these tough perennials, and influenced those I grow to this day.

Garden worthiness needn't mean sacrificing any of the tempting qualities of less hardy plants or inviting a range of bland specimens into your borders. Grasses are an excellent place to start, and robust, clump-forming types (of which there are many) are indispensable. A favourite of mine is *Panicum virgatum* 'Warrior' (see page 62). Slow to emerge in the spring, it has streaked foliage that matures to produce flower heads with a sumptuous metallic-purple lustre and its winter effect is also highly decorative.

Grasses complement a multitude of perennials. *Linaria purpurea* 'Canon Went' (page 62), for example, produces spikes of highly delicate, creamy-pink flower heads in early summer. This garden stalwart will flower reliably until late autumn and is easily raised from seed. *Thalictrum* 'Elin' (page 64) – a hybrid between *T. flavum* subsp. *glaucum* and *T. rochebruneanum* – has a similarly ephemeral nature but is significantly larger. Its light frame is deceptively strong and from early to midsummer the flower clusters resemble clouds of mauve and cream.

Less statuesque planting can still achieve something visually striking. The euphorbias include an often overlooked, low, clump-forming species: *Euphorbia epithymoides* (page 60), which produces round flat heads of luminous green, sulphurous yellow bracts in early spring, setting off the inconspicuous flowers. If light levels are a struggle then *Omphalodes cappadocica* 'Cherry Ingram' (page 62) with a low-growing habit ▷

*Holds an Award of Garden Merit from the Royal Horticultural Society.
†Hardiness ratings given where available.

▷ is characterised by numerous intense electric-blue flowers, synonymous with the borage family.

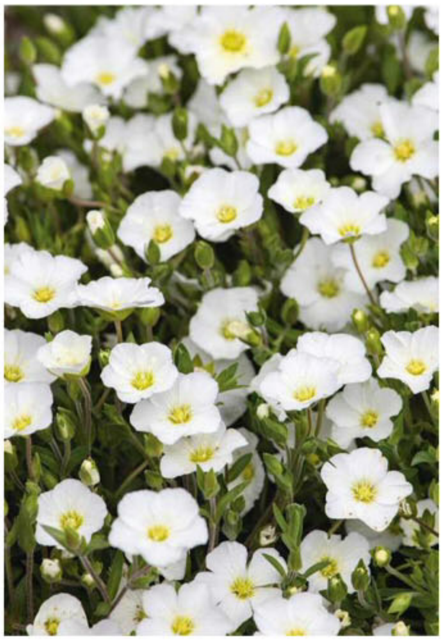
I first came across the melancholy thistle *Cirsium heterophyllum* (below right) driving down a semi-derelict track in the Yorkshire Dales where it shot through the fallen remains of a dry-stone wall. It's an endemic plant that needs containing as it spreads by highly enthusiastic runners. A bottomless plastic container sunk into the soil to contain the runners works very effectively. Your efforts will be rewarded by the multitude of long-lasting thistle heads that appear from midsummer until early autumn and which are divine.

Umbellifers are highly distinctive plants and include a black-leaved form of our inherently tough native cow parsley: *Anthriscus sylvestris* 'Ravenswing' (see right). I adore this plant and enjoy contrasting its dark foliage with the spike-like, pink racemes of *Physostegia virginiana* 'Rosea' (page 63) and often pair both with hardy asters to extend the summer display well into autumn's grasp. *Aster* x *frikartii* 'Mönch' (page 59) described by horticulturist Graham Stuart Thomas as 'the finest aster for long display' is impossible to fault, as is *Symphyotrichum novi-belgii* 'Little Pink Beauty' (page 64), a recently re-named aster that keeps you waiting until its flowers are revealed in September followed by an extremely handsome October crescendo. Late-summer spectacles should include the subtle beauty of *Succisella inflexa* 'Frosted Pearls' (page 62), with its small, spherical, pale-lilac flower heads that float above a matrix of stalks.

For the poorest-quality ground *Teucrium hircanicum* (page 64) is an enduring plant that will reliably produce masses of rich-purple flowers throughout the summer and autumn, attracting countless insects. I use teucriums where salvias, even hardy ones, would struggle. *Potentilla* 'Gibson's Scarlet' (page 63) with its fiery crimson flowers has a low, semi-scrambling nature and the two planted together will jostle beautifully for space.

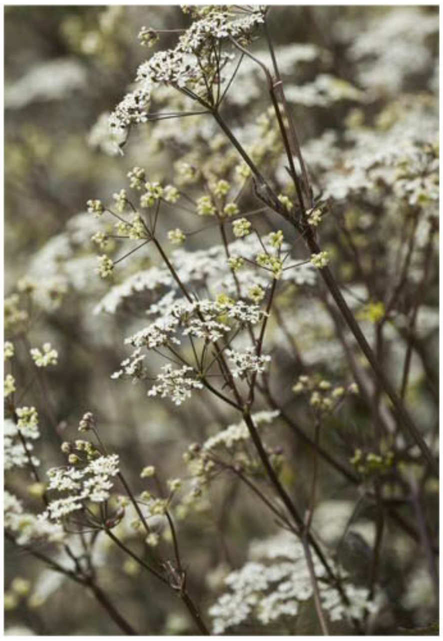
Far from being in the minority, plants such as these that will succeed against the odds are vast in number, and these often underused fail-safe plants deserve to be grown and celebrated far more. □

- Tom's recommendations for plants for fail-safe borders continue over the next six pages.



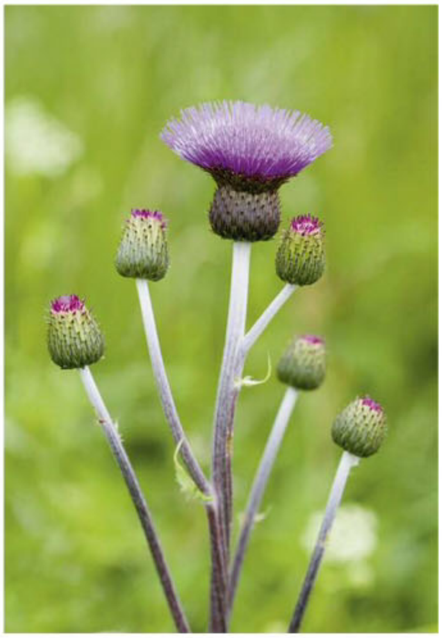
PAUL WESTON / ALAMY STOCK PHOTO

Arenaria montana
A great plant for rockeries and well-drained borders. Produces spectacular, flower-laden cascades of evergreen foliage. Best raised from seed in the spring. 10-20cm x 50cm. AGM. RHS H5, USDA 4a-8b.



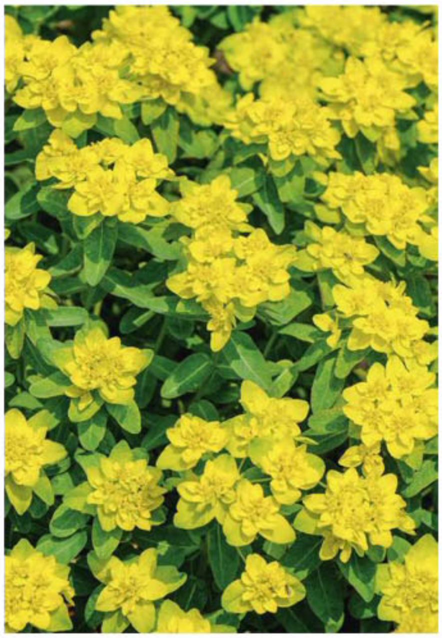
FIONA McLEOD / GAP PHOTOS

***Anthriscus sylvestris* 'Ravenswing'**
A cow parsley with dark leaves that show off the distinctive white flowers. If the foliage needs refreshing, cut it back to produce another crop. It perpetuates by self-seeding. 1-1.5m x 50cm. RHS H6, USDA 3a-10b.



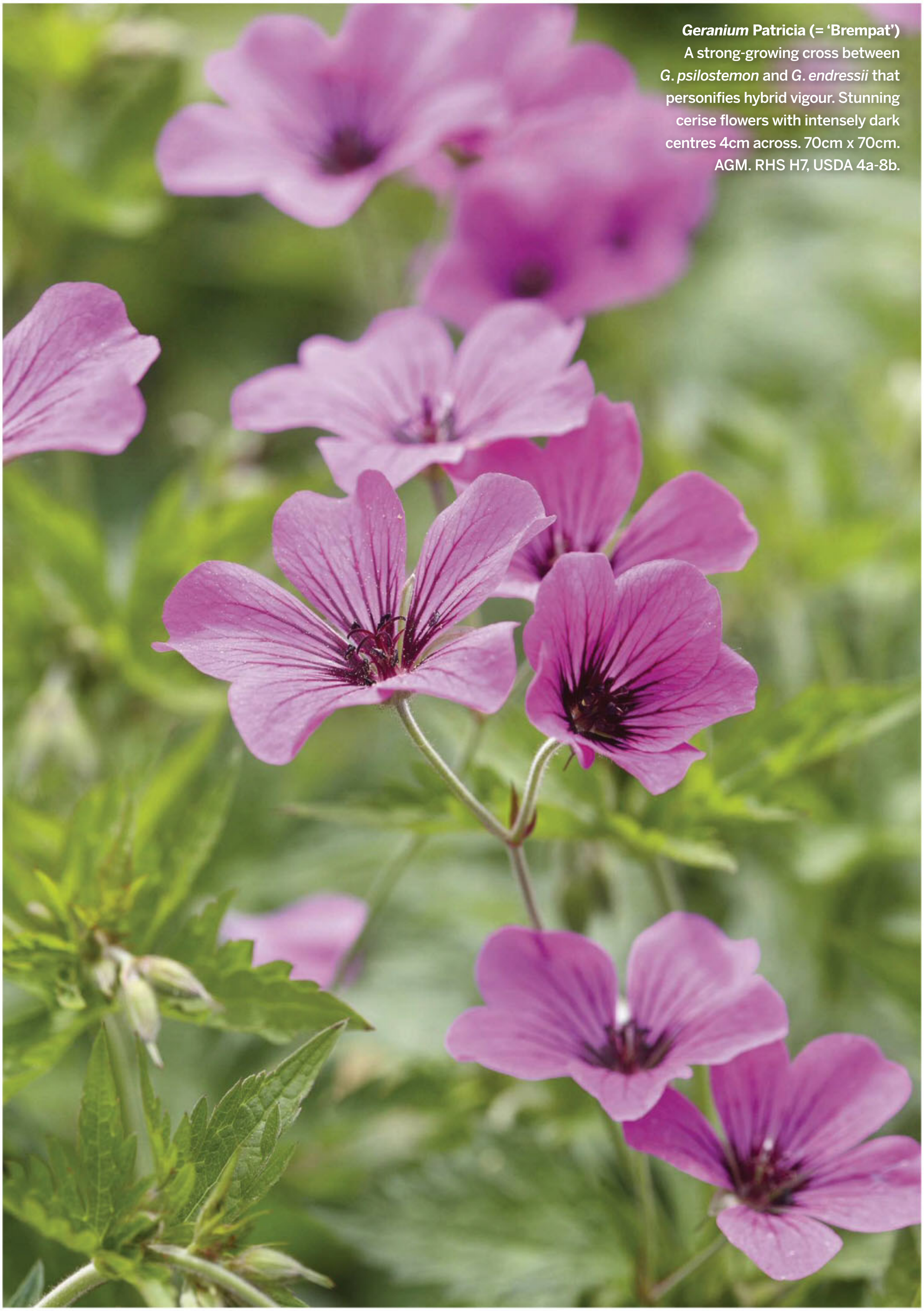
ULLSTEIN BILD / GETTY

Cirsium heterophyllum
The melancholy thistle (supposedly a cure for sadness) produces intensely coloured, purple-pink heads on stout silver stems. A magnet for bees and admiring glances. Prefers a sunny position. 1-1.2m x 1.5m. RHS H7, USDA 5a-8b.



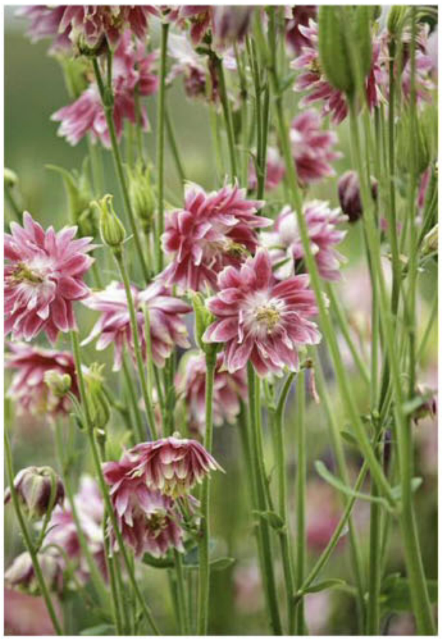
GARY K SMITH / ALAMY STOCK PHOTO

Euphorbia epithymoides
New leaves glow with a green luminosity in early spring to contrast with fresh growth of neighbouring perennials. Best raised from seed in well-drained soil; will sulk in overly wet ground. 25cm x 30cm. RHS H5, USDA 4a-8b.

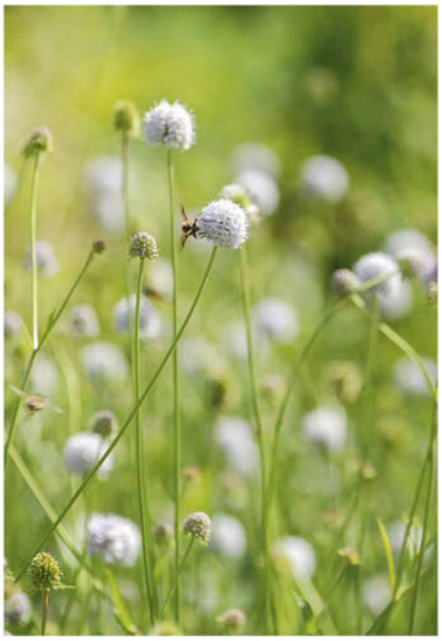


Geranium **Patricia (= 'Brempat')**
A strong-growing cross between *G. psilostemon* and *G. endressii* that personifies hybrid vigour. Stunning cerise flowers with intensely dark centres 4cm across. 70cm x 70cm. AGM. RHS H7, USDA 4a-8b.

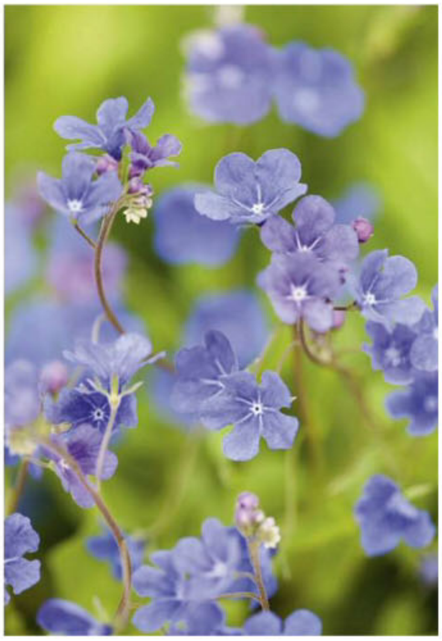
CHR ST NA BOLLEN / GAP PHOTOS


BIOSPHOTO/DG CREA - DG FLOR / THE GARDEN COLLECTION/FP

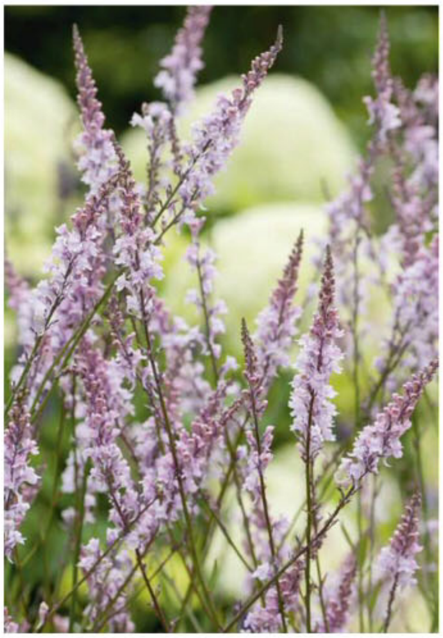
***Aquilegia vulgaris* var. *stellata* 'Nora Barlow'**
Adaptable to both sun and shade, this robust plant need not be confined solely to the cottage garden. Double flowers, suffused red, pink and green in May and June. 90cm x 40cm. RHS H7, USDA 3a-8b.


JULIE DANSEREAU / GAP PHOTOS

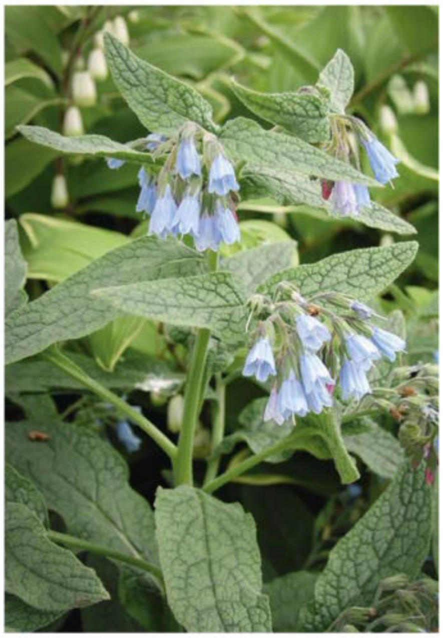
***Succisella inflexa* 'Frosted Pearls'**
A relative of devil's bit scabious, this adaptive perennial grows in the poorest depths of soil. Its pale-lilac flowers open well into October. A good food source for bees. 90cm x 90cm. RHS H7, USDA 5a-8b.


PERNILLA BERGDAHL / GAP PHOTOS

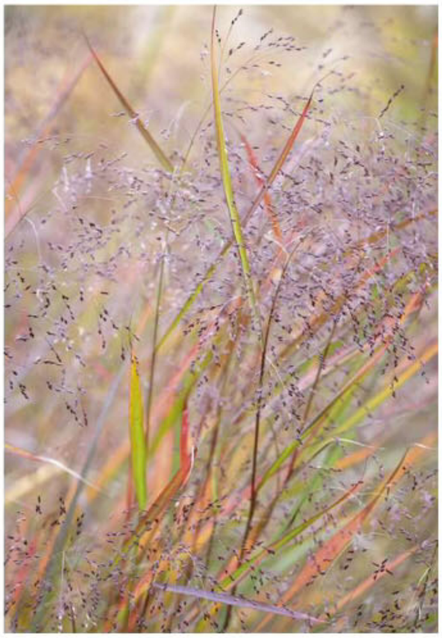
***Omphalodes cappadocica* 'Cherry Ingram'**
The intensity of the blue colour on its forget-me-not like flowers cannot be overstated. Flowers are held in short sprays over clumps of smooth lanceolate leaves. 20cm x 30cm. AGM. RHS H6, USDA 6a-9b.


JULIE DANSEREAU / GAP PHOTOS

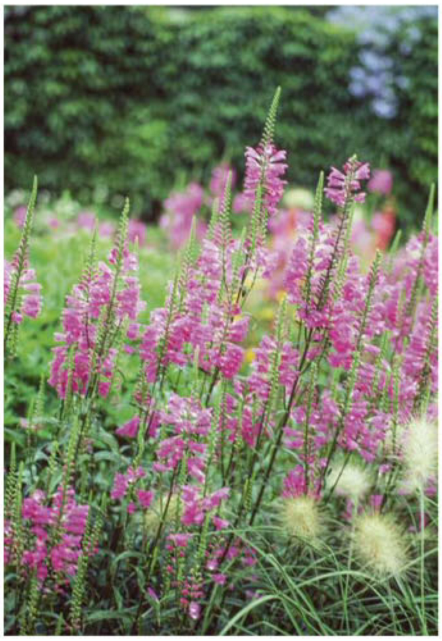
***Linaria purpurea* 'Canon Went'**
Pale-pink flower spikes atop blue-green stems teem with insects from June to September and make excellent cut flowers. Well-drained soil, preferably in sun. 90cm x 30cm. RHS H6, USDA 5a-9b.


GARDEN WORLD IMAGES

***Symphytum* 'Hidcote Blue'**
Extremely useful as a dense ground cover plant. Unrolling croziers of red buds change to blue and white tubular flowers that emerge from April through to early June. 45cm x 90cm. RHS H7, USDA 4a-8b.

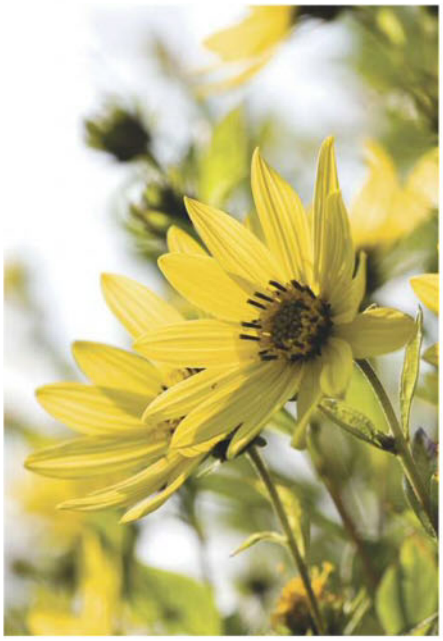

MATT ANKER / GAP PHOTOS

***Panicum virgatum* 'Warrior'**
Clump-forming grass with green and purple foliage that intensifies in colour throughout the season. Produces purple flowers that flower freely all summer. Attractive winter structure. 1.4m x 60cm. RHS H7, USDA 5a-9b.



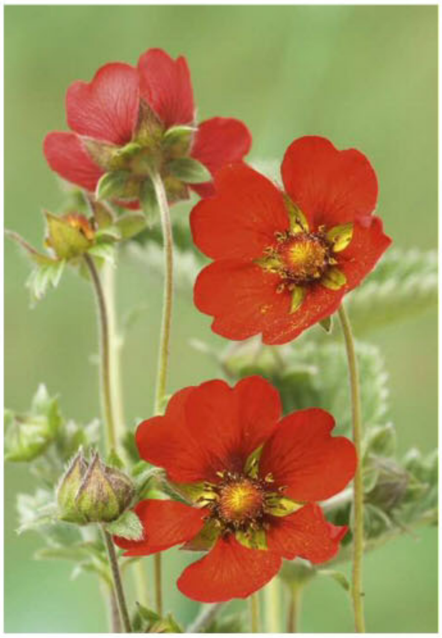
DEA / RANDOM / GETTY

Physostegia virginiana 'Rosea'
Forms a dense mat of impressive flowers in summer and autumn. The individual flowers, which are arranged in four vertical tiers, move as if on a ball and socket joint. 70cm x 35cm. RHS H6, USDA 3a-9b.



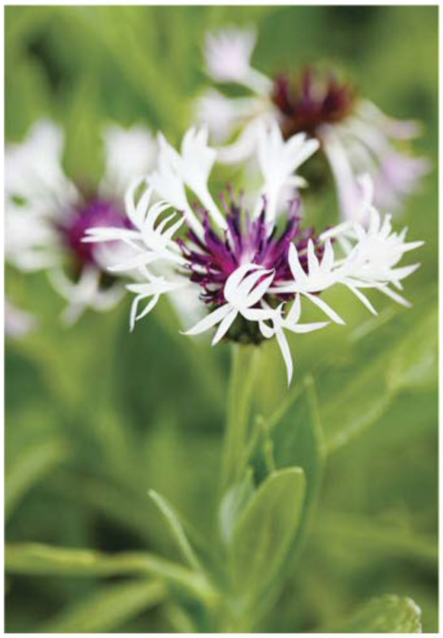
SHARON PEARSON

***Helianthus* 'Lemon Queen'**
A sturdy, non-invasive cultivar that produces delightful, softly coloured, lemon-yellow sunflowers. Particularly good paired with other statuesque perennials. 1.5-2.5m x 50cm-1m. AGM. RHS H4, USDA 4a-9a.



FIONA LEA / GAP PHOTOS

***Potentilla* 'Gibson's Scarlet'**
Semi-scrambling herbaceous plant with intensely coloured, dark-eyed flowers. Grows in the shallowest soils and favours a bright, well-drained site. 30-50cm x 30-50cm. AGM. RHS H7, USDA 5a-9b.



ANNAICK GUITTENY

***Centaurea montana* 'Purple Heart'**
As a boy, I was drawn to the electric colour and funky design of *Centaurea montana*. 'Purple Heart' has distinctive white florets around a rich, velvety centre and doesn't run amok. 40cm x 60cm. RHS H7, USDA 3a-8b.

Cultivation

All of the plants profiled here are ones that have resolutely buffered some of the worst Cumbrian winters, where others have perished. Not only are all of the plants featured easy to propagate by seed or division, they also all have the potential to enhance the gardening endeavours for any gardener experienced or not, looking for a reliable and inspiring display.

- The performance of all plants will reflect the ground conditions and how well you prepare your soil prior to planting. Working in organic matter and opening up the soil structure while also enhancing the quantity of available nutrients to your plants will translate into strong, balanced growth. Your long-term approach to soil husbandry should centre on an annual mulch in the spring or autumn, feeding not only your soil but your plants.

- Many of the strongest-growing perennials will need lifting and dividing to rein them in and avoid smothering neighbouring plants. It will provide you with masses of additional material to use elsewhere in the garden. Ornamental grasses should be lifted in the spring but many perennials can be divided in the autumn as well.

- A vast range of perennials can be sown from seed. We move seedlings sown in the spring from seed trays into modular cell trays to grow into strong, well-rooted plug plants. These can either be potted up or planted straight out into the garden. Large areas can be planted very effectively using well-developed plug plants.

- Garden plants that hanker after overly wet ground conditions are in the minority and every effort should be made to ensure that soil has good drainage – especially during the winter months. Adding organic matter will help, as will digging in some horticultural grit.

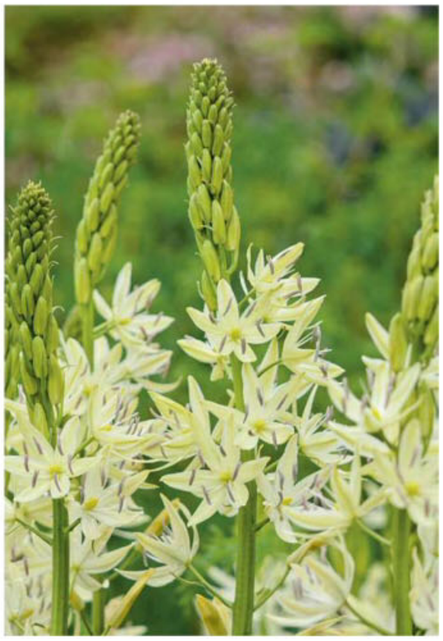
Recommended reading

- *Beth Chatto's Woodland Garden: Shade-Loving Plants for Year-Round Interest* by Beth Chatto (Cassell Illustrated, 2002).
Demonstrates what can be achieved in largely shady conditions, using many robust perennials.

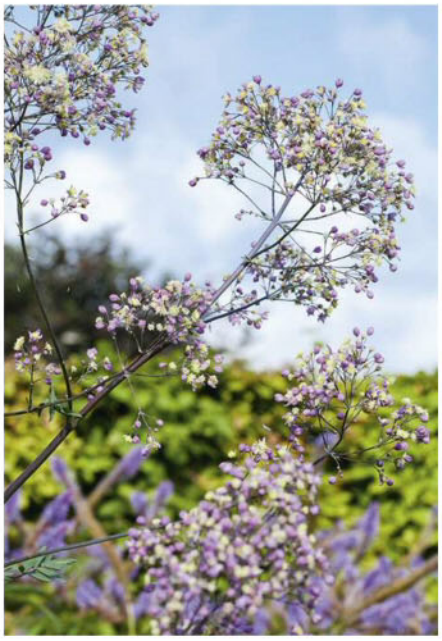
- *Planting: A New Perspective* by Piet Oudolf and Noël Kingsbury (Timber Press, 2013).
An inspiring resource that details the experimental and creative use of hardy perennials along with a superb plant directory.

Where to buy

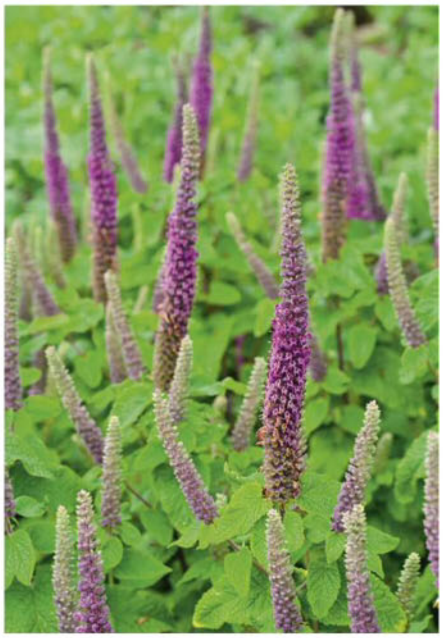
- **Abi and Tom's Garden Plants**
  Halecat, Witherslack,
  Cumbria LA11 6RT.
  Tel 015395 52946,
  abiandtom.co.uk
- **Beth Chatto Gardens**
  Elmstead Market,
  Colchester, Essex CO7 7DB.
  Tel 01206 822007,
  bethchatto.co.uk
- **Chiltern Seeds**
  Crowmarsh Battle Barns,
  114 Preston Crowmarsh,
  Wallingford, Oxfordshire OX10 6SL.
  Tel 01491 824675,
  chilternseeds.co.uk
- **Duchy of Cornwall Nursery**
  Cott Road, Lostwithiel,
  Cornwall PL22 0HW.
  Tel 01208 872668,
  duchyofcornwallnursery.co.uk
- **Great Dixter**
  Northiam, Rye,
  East Sussex TN31 6PH.
  Tel 01797 252878,
  greatdixter.co.uk
- **Hardy's Cottage Garden Plants**
  Priory Lane, Freefolk, Whitchurch
  Hampshire RG28 7FA.
  Tel 01256 896533,
  hardys-plants.co.uk
- **Jelitto Seeds**
  29685 Schwarmstedt,
  Postfach 1264, Germany.
  Tel +49 (0)5071 98290,
  jelitto.com


STEFFEN HAUSER / BOTANIKFOTO / ALAMY STOCK PHOTO

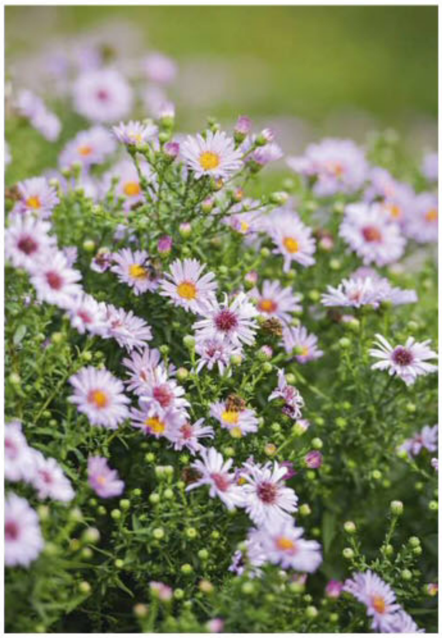
Camassia leichtlinii* subsp. *leichtlinii
Produces erect racemes of starry, creamy-white flowers (6cm wide) in late spring. Has a longer flowering period than the blue form and will naturalise given the right conditions. 1m x 40-60cm. RHS H4, USDA 5a-9b.


ROBERT MABIC / GAP PHOTOS

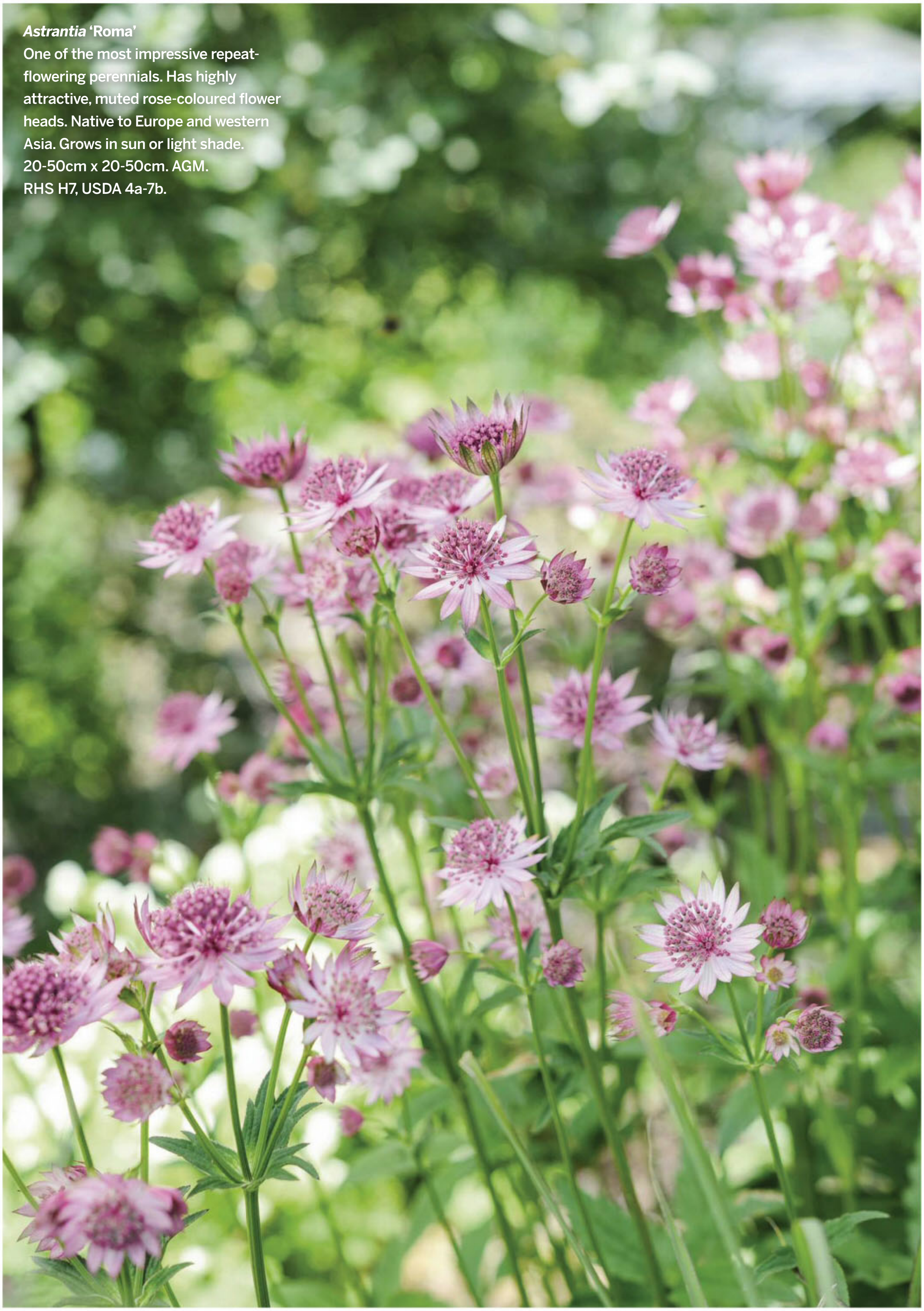
***Thalictrum* 'Elin'**
In midsummer produces loose, elegant sprays of soft-lavender flowers with contrasting tufts of yellow stamens. Perfect in a woodland garden or moist, sunny border. 1.8-2.4m x 40-60cm. RHS H7, USDA 5a-9b.


STEFFEN HAUSER / BOTANIKFOTO / ALAMY STOCK PHOTO

Teucrium hircanicum
Intense, purple flowers are produced on salvia-like flower heads. Planted close to a gravel surface it will self-seed freely and seedlings transplant easily. Sun to part shade. 30-40cm x 30cm. RHS H7, USDA 8a-10b.


JOANNA KOSSAK / FP / THE GARDEN COLLECTION

***Symphyotrichum novi-belgii* 'Little Pink Beauty'**
Single, soft-pink flowers cover a dense clump of mid-green leaves from September to October. As flowers age, lilac becomes more intense. 70cm x 70cm. RHS H7, USDA 4a-8b.



Astrantia **'Roma'**
One of the most impressive repeat-flowering perennials. Has highly attractive, muted rose-coloured flower heads. Native to Europe and western Asia. Grows in sun or light shade. 20-50cm x 20-50cm. AGM. RHS H7, USDA 4a-7b.

JASON INGRAM

Jimi Blake

Hunting Brook Gardens are as boldly idiosyncratic as their creator, who gains his inspiration while bouncing up and down to 1970s club classics

WORDS **JODIE JONES** PORTRAIT **CHARLIE HOPKINSON**

Jimi Blake doesn't just love plants. He *really* loves plants. And after half an hour in his company so would anyone else. He is a colourful character with an even more colourful dress sense, and the garden he has created at Hunting Brook, near Dublin, has earned its place on the grand tour of the Irish greats, alongside Mount Usher and the National Botanic Gardens.

In the lush green landscape of County Wicklow, Jimi combines tropical rarities with the best of the prairie plants in high-octane combinations that take your breath away. Creatively innovative and technically expert, he is also passionate about communicating his enthusiasm to as many people as possible.

This horticultural high profile will come as no surprise to those who knew Jimi as a boy. "I grew up on my parents' farm with five older brothers and sisters [he is the youngest by 12 years] and I was always mad about plants," he says.

He had space to make his own little garden and at weekends would set up a stall at the end of the drive and sell the plants he had propagated to passersby. There was one disastrous incident when he accidentally put petrol in a paraffin heater and burned down the greenhouse (and very nearly the house as well), but life at home was generally idyllic.

In stark contrast, he had a miserable time at school. It was so bad that when his jaw was wired shut following an operation to correct an overgrowth in the bone, he just remembers the relief of not having to talk to anyone. "But at the end of every day, I'd set foot in the garden and be happy."

There was never any doubt that he would train to be a gardener. "My heart was set on Dublin Botanic. When I got accepted my mother and I danced around the kitchen like lunatics."

He loved every second of the course, studying hard and partying harder. He funded the social whirl with a flock of 40 sheep that he kept throughout his student years.

Fresh out of college, he was appointed head gardener at the 38-acre Airfield Estate in Dundrum, County Dublin. "I was also the only gardener for a long time. But it was wonderful. I lived in the gate lodge and gradually restored the gardens over the 11 years I spent there," he says.

Visitor numbers increased steadily and in time the business side of the garden began to take over. "I didn't recognise what was happening until I took a trip to Worcester and visited Spetchley Park. The garden was a little ramshackle [it was subsequently renovated, in 2013], but it was magical, and it sparked something in me. I sat there and made a list of what I really wanted to do – open a garden, run an educational centre, travel, lecture and write. Then I went back to Airfield and resigned."

That was in September 2004. A year earlier, his parents had given him 20 acres of the family farm and in May 2005 he welcomed the first paying visitors to Hunting Brook. "I made it clear this was a work in progress, not a finished garden, but people seemed to like it."

He built a simple timber house at the heart of the site and surrounded it with beds full of large-scale planting combinations he describes as fiercely colourful and theatrically beautiful.

Jimi's achievements are even more impressive when you discover he has done it all himself. "I've no choice. I don't make enough money to employ another gardener." He also finds the time to run classes on gardening, crafts and healthy eating.

"And I educate myself by visiting other gardens, meeting other gardeners and going to seriously nerdy plant conferences," he says. When he doesn't have time to travel he roams the internet, looking at nurseries, touring gardens and conducting 'virtual' plant hunts. "If a plant catches my eye, I make it my mission to track it down."

Above all, he loves raising plants from seed. "When I open a seed catalogue I always look for the word 'new'. Even with a plant group I've never grown before, I'll still go for the new one. There is a thrill that comes from not knowing quite what will happen," he says.

He is currently excited by unusual foliage plants, and pushing the boundaries of what will survive in his garden. "I'm having fun with pseudopanax, scheffleras and oreopanax. I'm always trying something new. Nothing bores me more than a typical herbaceous border. I love colourful tapestries of craziness."

He also loves hats, yoga and 1970s disco music. "I've got a rebounder, which I set up in the garden first thing in the morning. Then I blast out club classics while I bounce up and down and contemplate a section of planting that I'm fine-tuning."

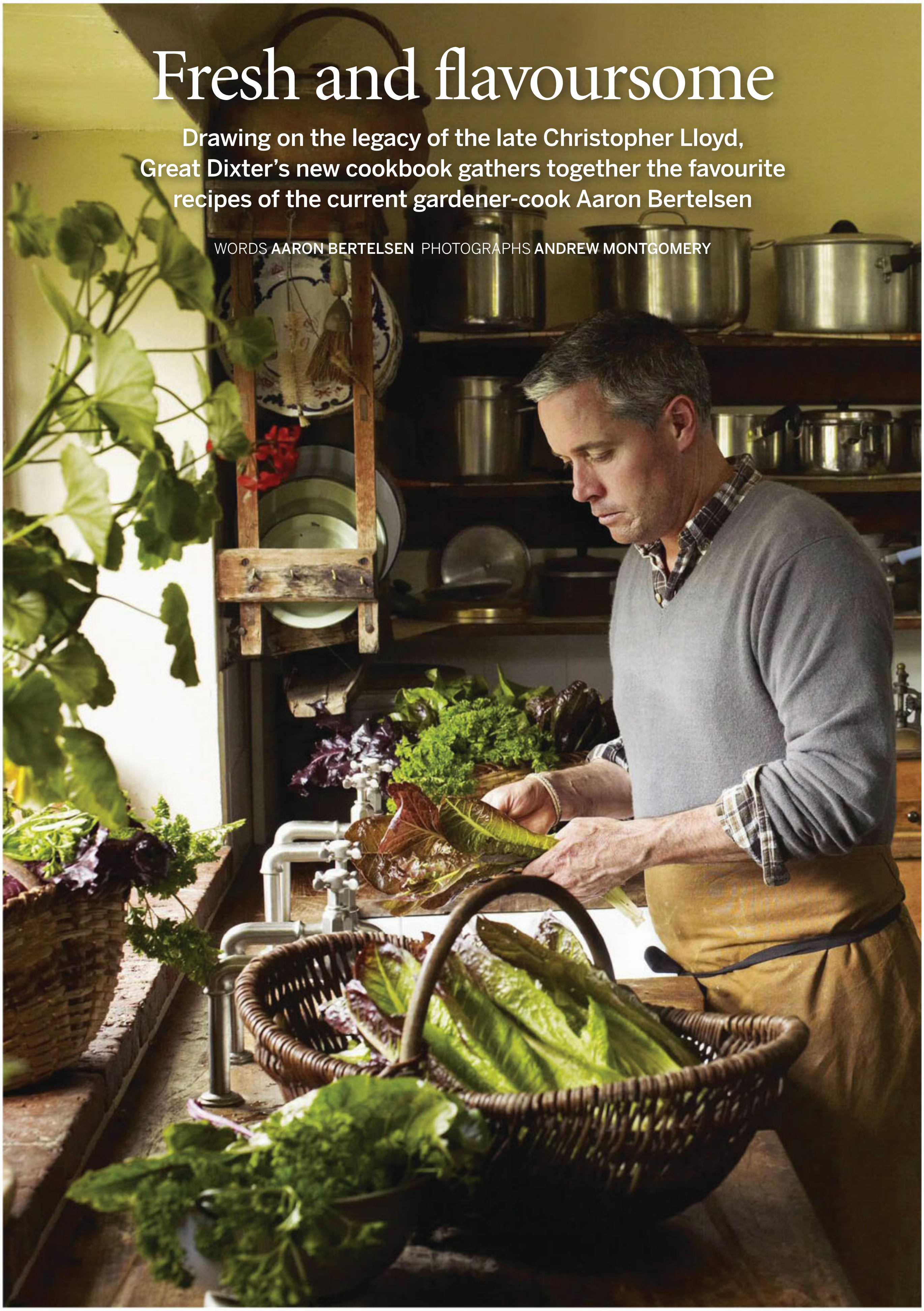
He is currently bouncing in front of a combination of exotic foliage and salvias, but by the time you read this, he will have moved his rebounder and his horticultural focus elsewhere. ☐

USEFUL INFORMATION

Hunting Brook Gardens, Lamb Hill, Blessington, Co Wicklow W91 YK33, Republic of Ireland. Tel + 353 (0)872 856 601, huntingbrook.com

Jimi runs monthly masterclasses in planting for keen gardeners and professional horticulturists. Visit the website for forthcoming dates.

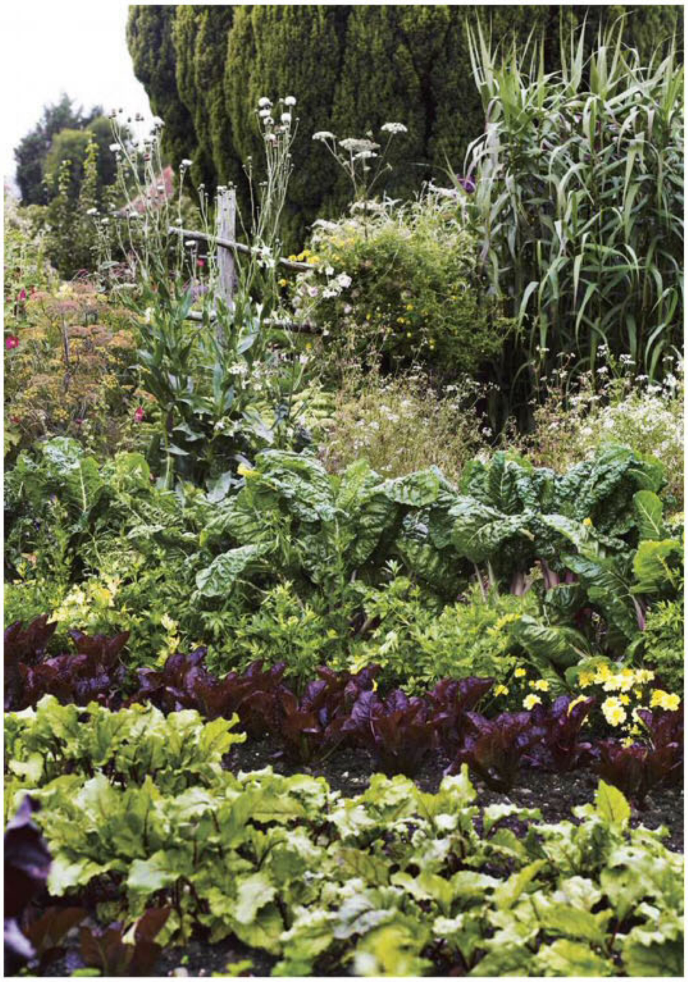
> *"Nothing bores me more than a typical herbaceous border. I love colourful tapestries of craziness"*



Fresh and flavoursome

Drawing on the legacy of the late Christopher Lloyd, Great Dixter's new cookbook gathers together the favourite recipes of the current gardener-cook Aaron Bertelsen

WORDS **AARON BERTELSEN** PHOTOGRAPHS **ANDREW MONTGOMERY**



Say the name 'Great Dixter', and for most people what first springs to mind is the ornamental garden, with its bold, even shocking combinations of colour and texture and its exuberant planting. The Lloyd family – Nathaniel, Daisy and their six children – created the vegetable patch, along with the rest of the garden, when they arrived here at the start of the 20th century, and home-grown produce formed an important part of their diet, as Daisy Lloyd's notebooks and recipes clearly show. Christopher, their youngest son, was to take over the house and garden and put both firmly on the map. In his later years, finding himself without a cook for the first time, he taught himself to cook and took great pleasure in producing delicious things made from his home-grown fruit and vegetables for both himself and his guests.

Christopher believed in celebrating whatever was in season at the time, and that simple cooking was the best way to appreciate the flavour of just-picked peas, or a pear or plum left to ripen on the tree. Now I am the person responsible for looking after the vegetable garden and the kitchen, and my aim is similar: to make the most of what is in season and show it off at its best. This is one of the great joys of growing your own – to enjoy vegetables and fruit as they should taste, freshly picked and packed with flavour.

I taught myself to cook out of necessity; living alone in my twenties, I was always in need of a good meal at the end of a hard day's gardening. Over the years, I have come to develop my own style, which, if pushed, I would describe as simple, seasonal and resourceful – I like to use fresh produce from the garden (home-grown fruit and vegetables taste so much better than shop bought) and I do hate to waste the crops I have grown. Very often, too, fruit and vegetables take centre stage in my cooking. Smoothies are a breakfast staple, and soups, salads and vegetable tarts form the backbone of our

▷

Aaron's essential veg

- **Beetroot** I grow several different cultivars. 'Detroit' has a great rich flavour and a mouth-feel like a waxy potato. It bakes brilliantly. 'Crimson Globe' looks beautiful; it is slightly lighter in colour and has distinct rings that remain visible after cooking. But my favourite of favourites has to be 'Boltardy'. It is an excellent doer and lives up to its name.
- **Broad beans** 'Aquadulce Claudia' is the very definition of reliability, and seems to do well from an early sowing. If you are eager for an early harvest, try 'Express', which as its name suggests is very quick off the mark.
- **Carrots** 'Early Nantes' does well in our soil and, living up to its name, crops early with an excellent flavour. 'Chantenay Red Cored' is a French cultivar with a sweet flavour.

▷ lunches throughout the year. Where meat does appear, it plays a bit part rather than being star of the show. The connection between kitchen and the garden is one of the things that makes my job so fascinating. Every year brings something new and different. Both cooking and gardening offer tremendous scope for creativity, whether that is adding finely chopped rosemary to a loaf of bread or growing different types of beetroot in triangles next to each other to create a foliage pattern, or sowing cream-coloured marigolds next to dark-leaved lettuces.

Growing produce and cooking on the scale that we do at Great Dixter takes a great deal of space, energy and time. But you do not need a large plot or a lot of money to experience the pleasure of growing your own. The key is to start with what you can manage so that it becomes a pleasure rather than a chore.

Spring is the season to get going on your seed sowing. You will find the job of choosing seed much easier if you are diligent about making notes through the growing season, noting the variety, sowing dates and also where the seed came from. Anything that fails to germinate or perform well gets a line put through it. That way, when I come to choose my seed, I can see exactly what worked and what didn't.

With some crops, such as carrots and beetroot, you should sow directly into the ground as they do not like to have their roots disturbed once they have reached a certain size – about 5cm across. With others, such as lettuce and spinach, it is a question of weighing up the pros and cons. Direct sowing means that you don't have to spend time pricking out, but it also leaves you at the mercy of the elements and pests.

To increase your chances of success, the first step is to prepare the soil well to get rid of large stones or clods that could sit on top of a seedling and stop it pushing its way out of the ground. Winter digging will give the frost a chance to break the soil down, and adding plenty of organic matter will improve the texture. I rotavate in spring, but you can just go over it with a garden fork. Finally, use a rake to give a good fine surface.

Timing is also key: soil temperature needs to be around 7.5°C for seeds to germinate. You can use a thermometer to check this, but I do it by feel. Avoid sowing when the soil is too wet, as seeds can rot before they germinate.

Sow seed in a shallow drill. As a rule, this should be about twice the depth of the seed. Sow thinly, then cover with soil. Label the row and water in the seeds using the fine rose on a watering can. In dry weather you will need to keep watering by hand until the seedlings are strong. You might need to thin them to avoid mildew and other problems associated with overcrowding and poor air circulation.

Sowing under glass is my preferred method of sowing as it gives greater control and reduces waste. I sow most seeds in 12.5cm pots, then move them into plug trays when the first true leaves appear. Once the roots are visible at the bottom of the plugs, I prepare them for planting out by hardening them off. This means putting them outside during the day and bringing them back in at night or standing them in a cold frame with the glass propped open during the day. By the time the conditions are right for the plants to go out, they should be strong and healthy. □

READER EVENT

Join us on 5 June 2017 for our reader day at Great Dixter where author Aaron Bertelsen will offer tips on growing and cooking home-grown produce. See page 11 for details.

READER OFFER

The text and recipes are an extract from *The Great Dixter Cookbook* by Aaron Bertelsen (Phaidon, £24.95), ISBN 978-0714874005, published 20 March 2017. To receive a 30 per cent discount on the book go to **phaidon.com/dixter** and use the code **DX30** when prompted.

- **Chicory** I grow 'Rossa di Treviso' partly for the fantastic colour, which gives such a lift to a winter salad, but also because it is tough enough to keep growing in the colder months.
- **Courgettes** I grow 'Cube of Butter' for its beautiful butter-yellow colour; 'Tiger Cross', with green and cream stripes; and 'Dunja', a classic dark-green courgette, with good resistance to mildew and mosaic virus.
- **French beans** 'Cobra' is the king of climbing French beans as far as I'm concerned. It is prolific, easy to grow and has the bonus of attractive flowers too.
- **Kale** 'Nero di Toscana', 'Scarlet Curled', 'Precoce di Toscana 3', 'Winterbor' and 'Redbor' are my regulars.
- **Leeks** I grow 'Musselburgh' and the stockier 'Lyon 2 Prizetaker', which is perfect for stocks and slow-cooked dishes. Both do well on our soil and keep well all winter.
- **Lettuce** 'Little Gem' is a tried-and-tested classic with great flavour and texture. 'Chartwell' performs faithfully, regardless of the weather, producing tight little heads that are so sweet you can eat them without dressing. 'Devil's Tongue' is another favourite. It has a good flavour and a deep red/purple colour – very striking in a salad.
- **Peas** I am very loyal to 'Hurst Green Shaft' – Christopher always grew it, and it does well on Dixter soil. In 2015 I added 'Sugar Ann' to my repertoire.
- **Potatoes** 'Picasso' came out top for baking in our trials at Great Dixter. The knobbly tubers of 'Pink Fir Apple' have a nutty flavour and store extremely well; we use them for boiling and mashing throughout the winter.
- **Swiss chard** I grow 'Flamingo', which has the most wonderful hot pink stalks and ribs, almost as if it has sucked up food colouring.

• Turn the page for four fabulous recipes taken from *The Great Dixter Cookbook*. ▷

Great Dixter

Natural Gardening Company
Jericho Lettuce

> *‘By Sunday afternoon, my duties are over and I can venture into the garden to do a little work there myself. Meantime, from the garden’s produce, I have made artichoke and carrot soup. Leeks have accompanied boiled gammon, together with broad beans, frozen when really young, in mid-July last year. A huge salad was largely composed of home-grown ingredients… All in all, not a bad link between garden and kitchen, gardener and cook’*
>
> **Christopher Lloyd writing in *Gardener Cook* (2001)**

Johnny's Selected Seeds
Natural Gardening Company
Viola
Thompson & Morgan
Marigold
Organic
Peas
Organic
Sugar Ann
Beetroot
Grow Vegetable
Gourd, Small Fruited
Gremlins

Rhubarb tart

SERVES 8

- **375g chilled, sweet shortcrust pastry**
- **1kg rhubarb, chopped into 5cm pieces**
- **2tbsp demerara sugar**
- **120g caster sugar, plus extra for sprinkling (optional)**
- **Flour, for dusting**
- **Butter, for greasing**

Make this the day before so that the flavours soak into the pastry, or eat it immediately with cream, custard or ice-cream.

Preheat the oven to 190°C/375°F/Gas 5, placing an oven rack in the lower part of it. Butter a 25cm loose-bottom tart pan. Roll out the pastry thinly on a lightly floured work surface and use to line the prepared pan.

If using spring rhubarb, arrange it in the pastry case and sprinkle with the demerara sugar. If not using spring rhubarb, put the caster sugar and 200ml water into a pan and stir together over medium heat until the sugar dissolves. Bring to a gentle boil, then add the chopped rhubarb and simmer for 1 minute – you don't want it to lose its shape. Drain the rhubarb, then arrange inside the pastry case.

Place the filled case on a baking sheet and bake on a low oven rack for 40 minutes. Remove from the oven and slip off the outer ring, leaving the tart on the base. Return to the oven on the baking sheet for another 5-10 minutes so that the sides get really crisp. Slide on to a plate and sprinkle with caster sugar, if desired. Cool before serving.

Pickled pears

MAKES 3 x 450g JARS

- **900g pears, peeled, cored and sliced**
- **425ml apple cider vinegar**
- **450g caster sugar**
- **1 cinnamon stick**
- **10 cloves**
- **Thumb-size piece of stem ginger, sliced**

It was my friend Tom Coward, head gardener at Gravetye Manor, who first introduced me to this lovely preserve. There are lots of recipes for pickled pears, but some take up to a week to prepare. This version can be made in an evening, and I have found the results to be just as good, though it is best left for a month before eating so that the flavours can really penetrate the fruit. Use pears that still have some bite, but not so much that you cannot get your teeth into them, and make sure you reduce the liquid well to intensify the flavour. The pears go well with blue cheese.

Put all the ingredients into a pan with 850ml water and cook slowly until the pears start to soften, but only just (about 10 minutes). You want them to retain a bit of bite. Using a slotted spoon, transfer the pears to a colander and set aside to drain.

Meanwhile, increase the heat under the syrup left in the pan and boil rapidly for 15 minutes, or until it has reduced by about a third and thickened slightly. Pack the fruit into warm, sterilised jars and pour in enough hot syrup to cover. Seal immediately and store for a month before eating.

Crispy kale with sea salt and lemon

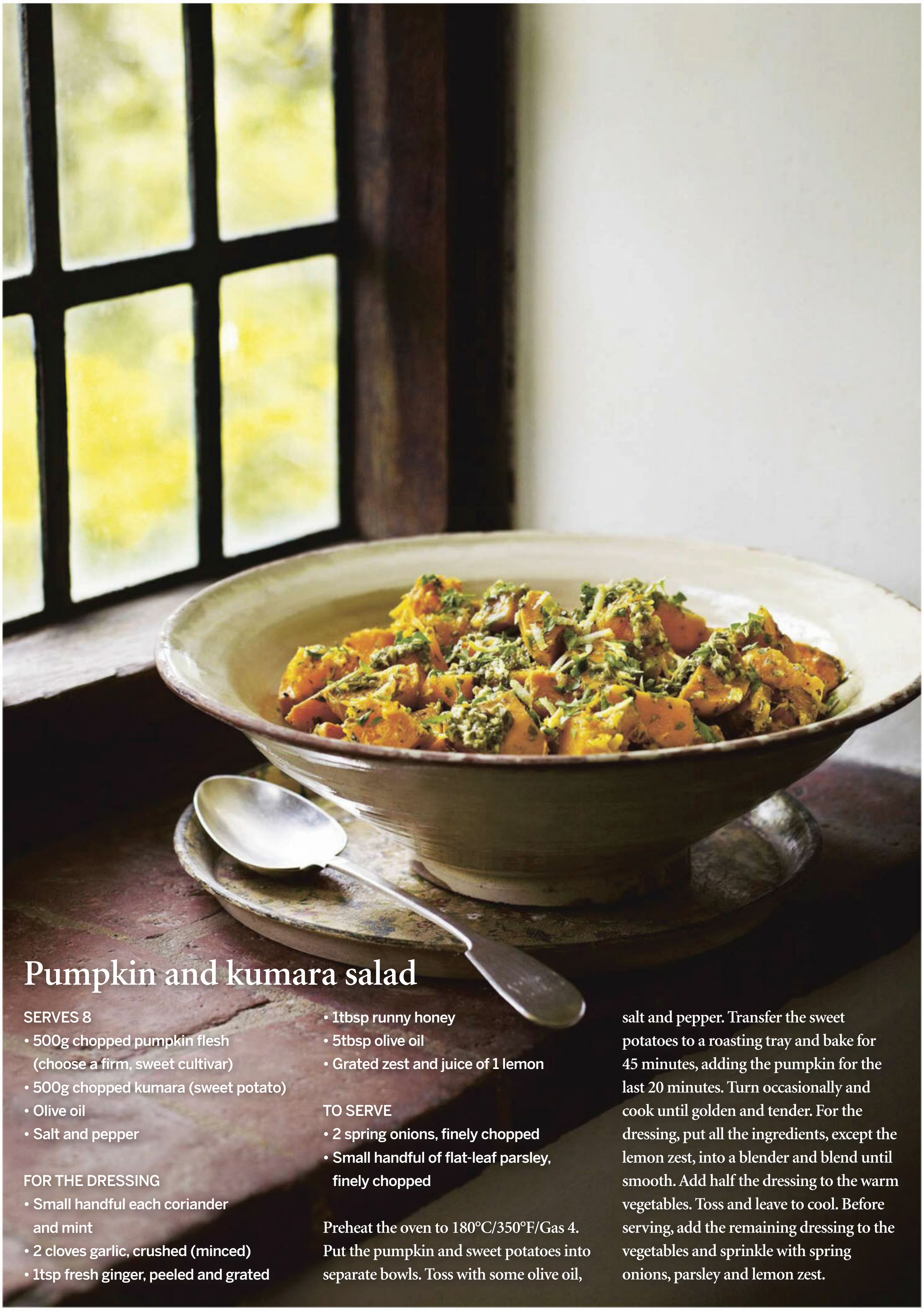
SERVES 4

- **165g whole kale leaves, tough stems and ribs removed, and torn or roughly chopped into 8-10cm pieces**
- **Juice and grated zest of 1 lemon**
- **1tbsp olive oil**
- **¼tsp salt**
- **¼tsp pepper**
- **Dash cayenne pepper**

This recipe comes from a lady I got talking to one day when I was working in the garden. I tried it that same night and loved it. Since then, lots of friends have taken the recipe home with them after eating it here. It makes a fantastic side dish with grilled fish or chicken: the lemon really cuts through the oil and lightens the earthy flavour of the kale. It's also a delicious appetiser with a chilled glass of wine or champagne before lunch or dinner. Note that it's important to chop the kale yourself – the stuff sold in supermarkets is chopped too small.

Preheat the oven to 180°C/350°F/Gas 4. Put the kale into a large bowl. Add the lemon juice, olive oil, cayenne pepper, salt and pepper and use your hands to massage the seasonings into the leaves. Lay them flat on a baking sheet and bake in the oven for 10-15 minutes, turning halfway through, until crisp and lightly browned.

Sprinkle the lemon zest over the crisps before serving.



Pumpkin and kumara salad

SERVES 8

- 500g chopped pumpkin flesh (choose a firm, sweet cultivar)
- 500g chopped kumara (sweet potato)
- Olive oil
- Salt and pepper

FOR THE DRESSING

- Small handful each coriander and mint
- 2 cloves garlic, crushed (minced)
- 1tsp fresh ginger, peeled and grated
- 1tbsp runny honey
- 5tbsp olive oil
- Grated zest and juice of 1 lemon

TO SERVE

- 2 spring onions, finely chopped
- Small handful of flat-leaf parsley, finely chopped

Preheat the oven to 180°C/350°F/Gas 4. Put the pumpkin and sweet potatoes into separate bowls. Toss with some olive oil, salt and pepper. Transfer the sweet potatoes to a roasting tray and bake for 45 minutes, adding the pumpkin for the last 20 minutes. Turn occasionally and cook until golden and tender. For the dressing, put all the ingredients, except the lemon zest, into a blender and blend until smooth. Add half the dressing to the warm vegetables. Toss and leave to cool. Before serving, add the remaining dressing to the vegetables and sprinkle with spring onions, parsley and lemon zest.

This page *Athyrium otophorum* var. *okanu*, with its bright yellowish-green, new growth that darkens with age is just one of the multitude of ferns stocked at Fernatix.

Opposite Fern friends Kerry Robinson (left) and Steven Fletcher amid the jungle-like foliage of their Suffolk nursery.

Showing form

Fernatix by name, fanatics by nature – from their specialist nursery in Suffolk, owners Steven Fletcher and Kerry Robinson are able to indulge their passion for pteridophytes

WORDS **JODIE JONES** PHOTOGRAPHS **RICHARD BLOOM**

Pity the would-be customer who once asked Steven Fletcher and Kerry Robinson when their ferns were going to flower. "We don't suffer fools gladly," says Steven. "I have been known to take a plant back out of someone's hands if I don't think they'll look after it properly. This is not just a business to us. We really are passionate about what we grow."

In the 15 years since Steven and Kerry started exhibiting they have won enough RHS Gold medals to paper half a wall in their loo – "although at first we did worry we wouldn't be good enough," says Steven. Their first attempt was at the 2002 London Flower Show where they won Best Exhibitor.

On a show circuit where pressed jeans or brass-buttoned blazers are the normal attire, the pair's topiarised beards and Kerry's assorted piercings have inevitably attracted attention, but no one minds what they look like when their ferns look this good. The shows are their shop front, and existing customers flock to pick up special orders while the newly smitten make impulse purchases from the amazing displays.

All the plants are raised in the back garden of their Suffolk house, and visitors must make an appointment to visit the nursery. "There are only the two of us, and Kerry also works as a lorry driver, so if we chatted to the customers all day we wouldn't have anything to sell them," says Steven.

Trundling along the road between Diss and Needham Market, you know you have reached your destination when you spot a stand of lacy, fronded tree ferns waving over a garden fence. When you come to the heart of the operation – glasshouses, a polytunnel and row upon row of pot-grown ferns – the variety of size, form and colour is dazzling. "Many people have no idea how varied they can be," says Steven.

Almost everything Steven and Kerry offer is raised from spores. "My philosophy is that if I can buy something in, so can any other nursery, and then what's the point of selling it?," says Steven. "We've tried to build up a list of excellent varieties that will grow in a wide range of conditions, and there will always be something special for the serious enthusiasts. I've got my favourites and if I don't like something I won't grow it."

His first love was a *Cyathea cooperi*, which he spotted when he was staging a display for the Cambridge Orchid Society (back then he was a painter-decorator who grew orchids as a hobby). "We used ferns to fill in between our display plants. I was instantly attracted to the wonderfully hairy cyathea with its amazing croziers. It looked prehistoric."

Steven began collecting ferns in a small way, but soon found his passion growing, and Kerry experienced a similar Damascene conversion. "The more you look at ferns, the more you see," he says. They began exhibiting at competitions and shows and so the nursery gradually came into being.

Growing from spores means they can try all sorts of unusual cultivars, and although they enjoy being the only nursery to stock a rarity, their esoteric idealism is tempered by a healthy dose of pragmatism. "If something takes decades to get to a saleable size, no one will want to pay what it costs," says Steven.

But they do have a loyal clientele who will wait until a longed-for speciality becomes available. Pteridomaniacs, like all serious plant enthusiasts, will go to great lengths to secure a prized cultivar and to keep it happy once they have taken possession.

"We've got one customer who is mad about cyatheas," says Steven. "His garden is full of them. He wraps them in electric warming cables to get them through the winter. God only knows what his electricity bill is like." For every would-be customer who gets sent off with a flea in their ear, there is a loyal throng who know where to go when they want something special. □

USEFUL INFORMATION

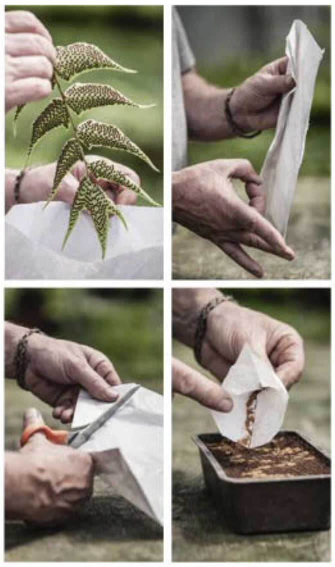
Address Stoke Ash, Suffolk IP23 7EN.

Website fernatix.co.uk

Steven's guide to growing ferns

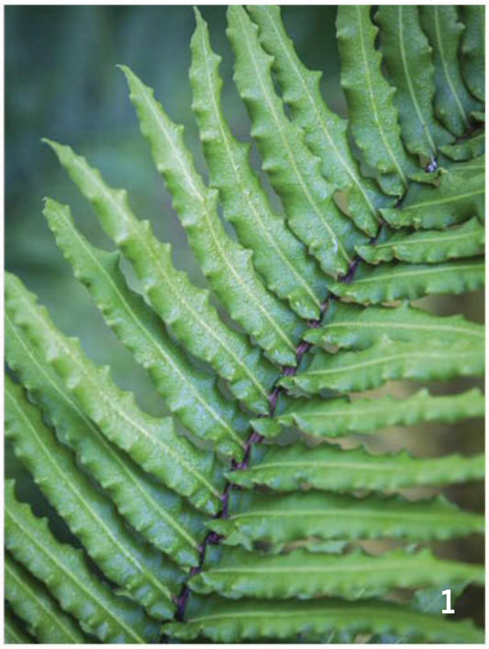
Step-by-step instructions for cultivating your own plants

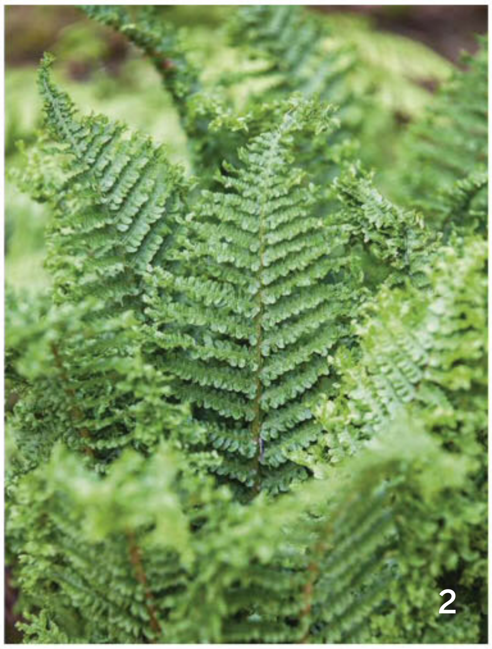
It is quite easy to propagate ferns from spores. Just fill a perfectly clean seed tray with normal multi-purpose seed compost and flood it with boiling water from the kettle to sterilise. Allow it to cool, then sow spores on the surface and wrap tightly in cling film. Keep out of direct sun and wait for germination. It can take as long as six months, and the tray will get all mossy during this time, but you just have to be patient. Don't be tempted to peek or you will let bacteria in and moisture out.

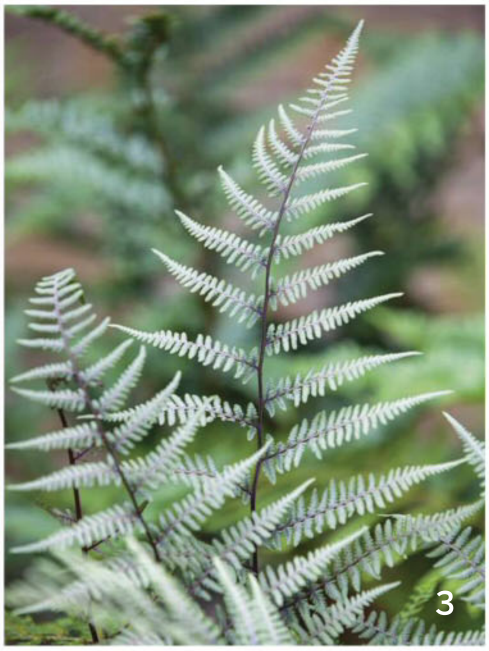


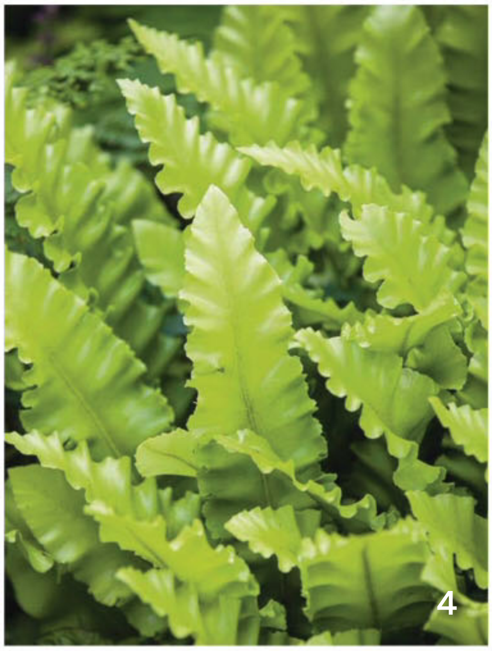
Other tips

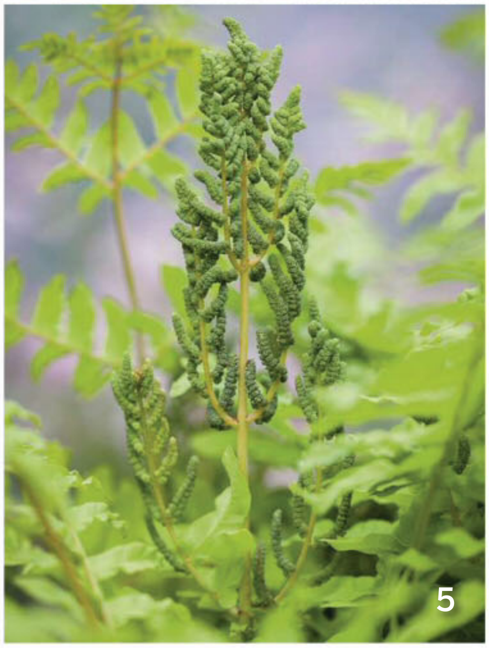
- **Dryopteris will adapt to the dry**. These are also the most sun-tolerant ferns, although they may get bleached in full sun. Plant in September when the ground is warm and damp and the plants can establish plenty of root before the coming spring. You could add a bit of compost at planting time, but there's no need to feed them.
- **Matteuceas and athyriums are moisture lovers**, so add a good bit of organic matter when planting. They also benefit from full shade. They will survive a bit of sun but will never look their best.
- **Tree ferns are quite tender and need to be brought under glass in winter**, where they can get really big. The toughest tree fern is *Dicksonia antartica*. We don't stock them, but we've got specimens in our garden that have survived at temperatures as low as -14°C. We just stuff a handful of oak leaves in the crown in winter – over-wrapping can actually cause them to rot.

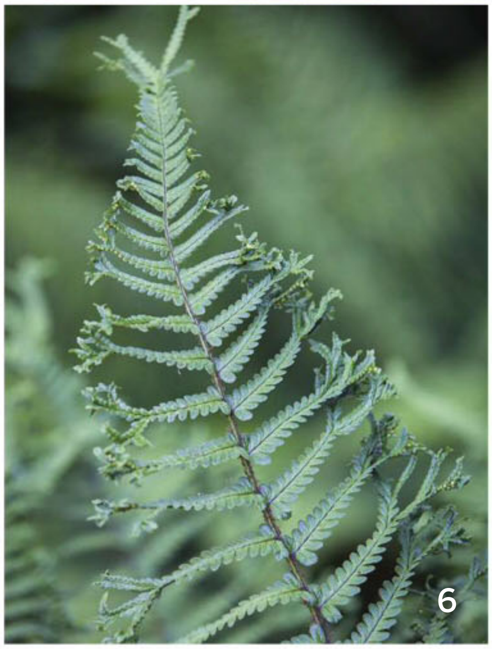












18 Fernatix favourite ferns

Steven and Kerry's recommendations for hardy garden ferns.

1 *Blechnum chilense*
Hearty evergreen fern with an upright habit. Spreads by underground rhizomes and, in rich and moist but well-drained soil, will form mighty clumps. 1.2m. AGM*. RHS H4, USDA 7b-11†.

2 *Dryopteris filix-mas* 'Crispa Cristata'
Excellent plant that prefers a moist and lightly shaded site, but will tolerate full sun provided it has plenty of water. 1m. AGM. RHS H7, USDA 3a-9b.

3 *Athyrium* 'Ghost'
Natural hybrid with strikingly pale fronds flushed pale pink down the midribs. Grows best in a rich soil with plenty of humus or leaf mould, and will adapt well to life in a large pot. 75cm. AGM. RHS H5, USDA 4a-9b.

4 *Asplenium scolopendrium* (Crispum Group)
This hart's tongue fern is a particularly attractive form that keeps its lush appearance through winter. Each frond has a distinctively crimped edge like the frill on a housemaid's cap. 50cm. RHS H6, USDA 5a-9b.

5 *Osmunda regalis*
The royal fern is a truly impressive deciduous species with huge, bright-green fronds that turn bronze in autumn before dying back for the winter. Needs damp, preferably acid, soil. 2m. AGM. RHS H6, USDA 3a-10b.

6 *Dryopteris affinis* 'Cristata'
The so-called king of ferns is large, impressive and, like most dryopteris, easy to grow. Readily available and an excellent entry-level fern provided you have the space. 90cm. AGM. RHS H5, USDA 4a-9b.

Turn over for more of Steven and Kerry's favourites ▷

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*Holds an Award of Garden Merit from the Royal Horticultural Society. †Hardiness ratings given where available.

7 *Cyrtomium tukusicola*
An unusual fern that Steven and Kerry have succeeded in growing from spore. It is generally hard to track down, so if you do manage to find an example of this unusual form of the holly fern, you will be well rewarded. 45cm.

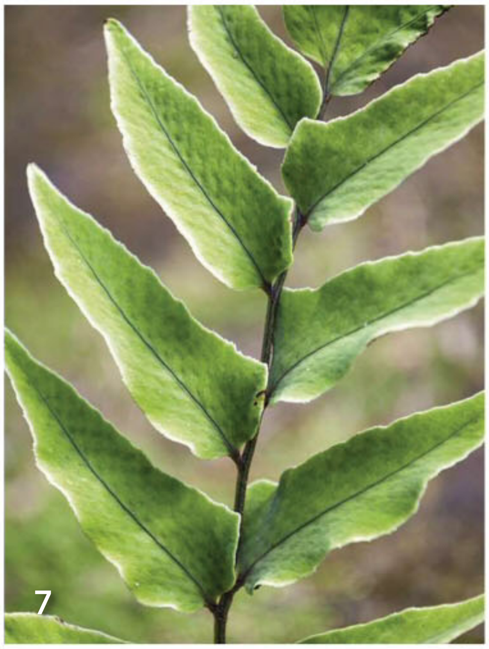
8 *Dryopteris dilatata* 'Crispa Whiteside'
A particularly good cultivar, with a more vertical habit than the species. It will stay green through all but the hardest of frosts. Dark scales along the stipe (stalks below the frond) contrast nicely with its bright-green foliage. 60cm. AGM. RHS H6, USDA 6a-9b.

9 *Dryopteris filix-mas* 'Linearis Polydactyla'
Interesting form with crested fronds that are narrowed and widely spaced to give an unusual lacy effect. Relatively wind resistant and tolerant of drier sites. 75cm. AGM. RHS H7, USDA 5a-9b.

10 *Athyrium niponicum* var. *pictum*
The Japanese painted fern has elegant silvery fronds touched with rich maroon and a rather prostrate habit. Prefers a moist site in shade or part-shade. 30-38cm. AGM. RHS H5, USDA 3a-8b.

11 *Asplenium trichomanes*
British native fern that is often found growing in walls in the wild. It is happy in well-drained conditions and will tolerate a fair degree of sun. 7-20cm. AGM. RHS H6, USDA 5a-9b.

12 *Onoclea sensibilis*
This arching fern, known as the sensitive fern, prefers a moist to quite wet site in shade or partial shade. Lovely by water, where it will spread on shallow rhizomes to make an easily controlled clump. 60cm. AGM. RHS H6, USDA 5a-9b.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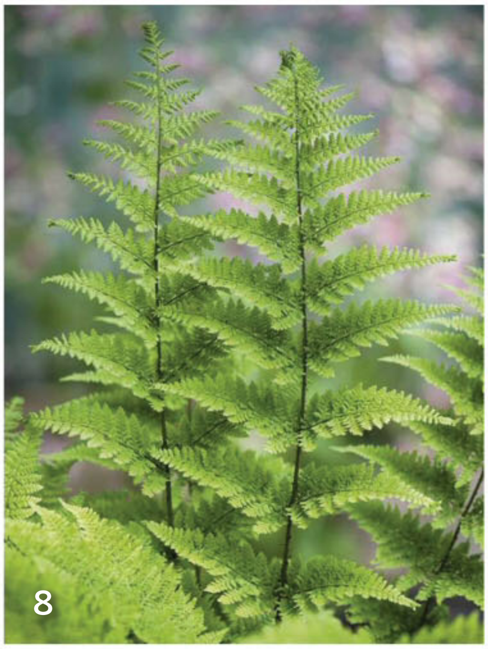
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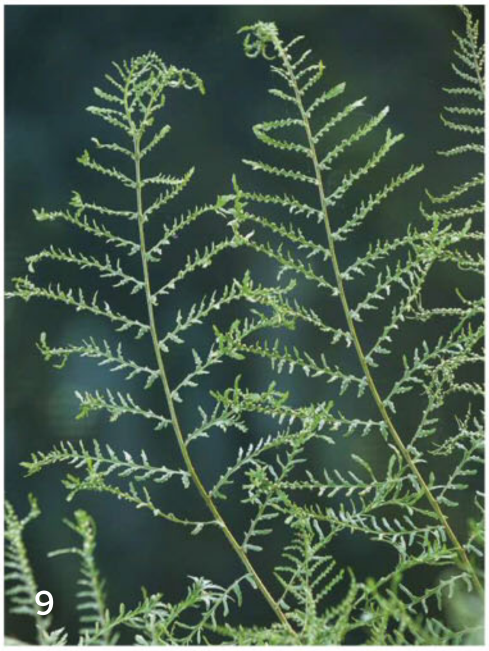
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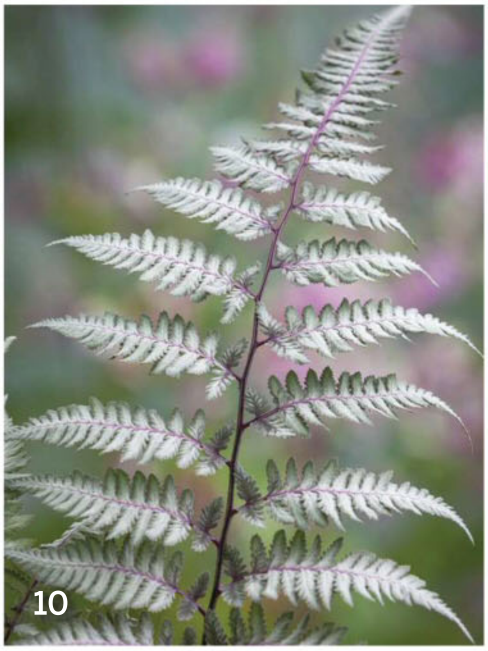
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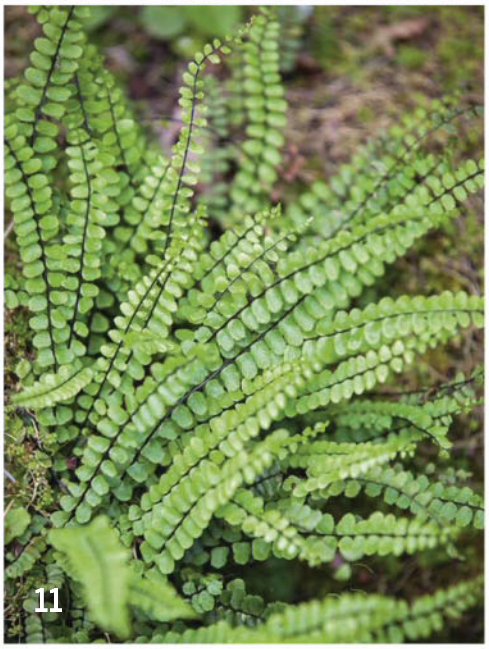
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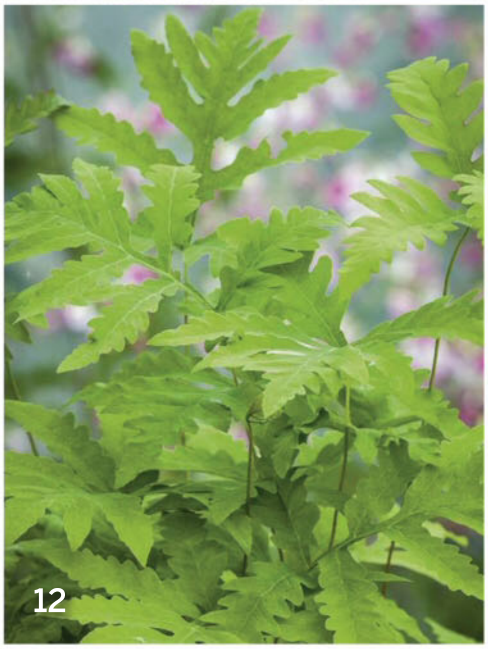
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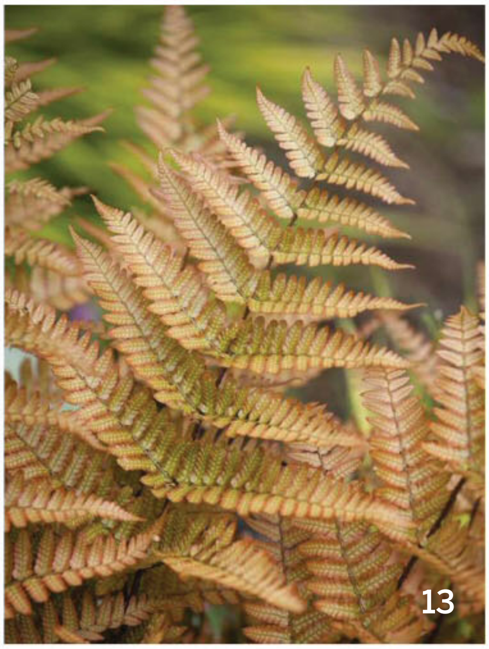
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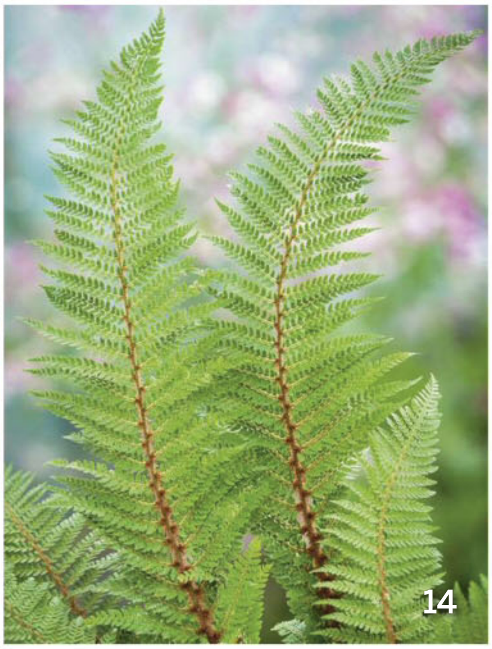
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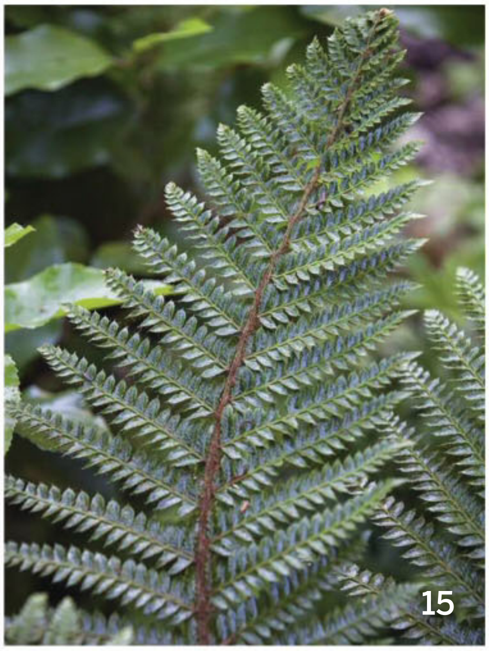
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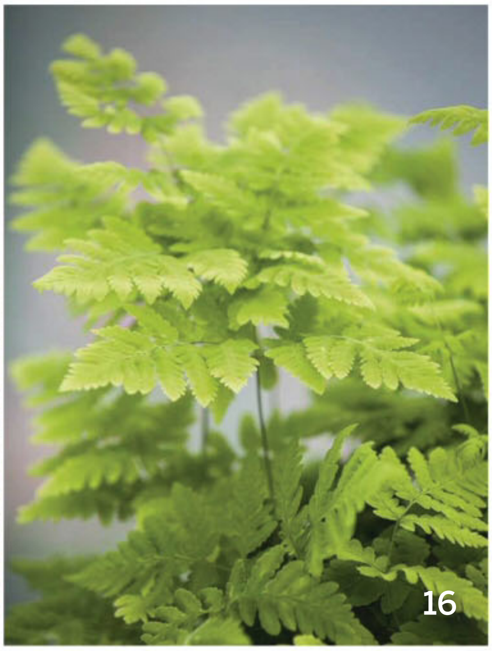
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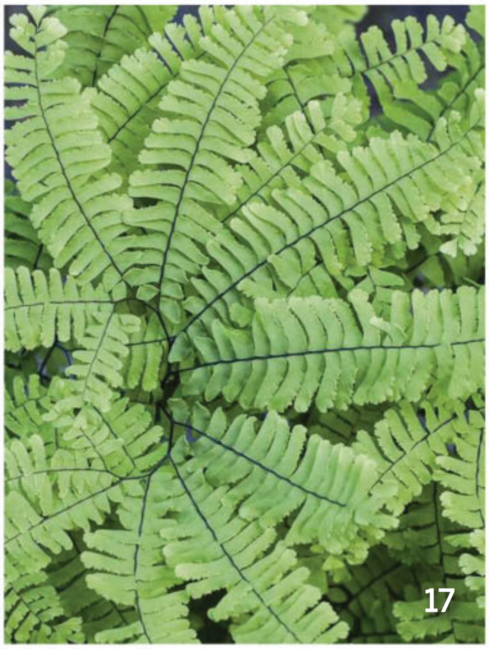
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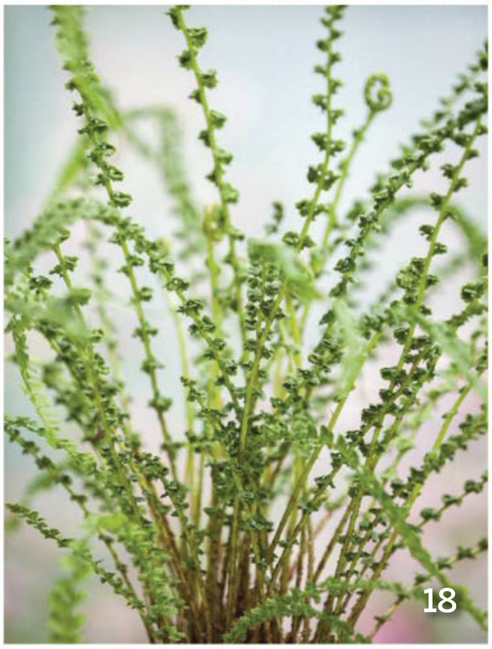
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13 *Dryopteris erythrosora*
Excellent addition to any fern collection. The new growth is a surprisingly glossy red, which gradually fades through bronze to green. Generally, it produces new growth throughout the season so it will always add a splash of colour to the garden. 60cm. AGM. RHS H4, USDA 5a-9b.

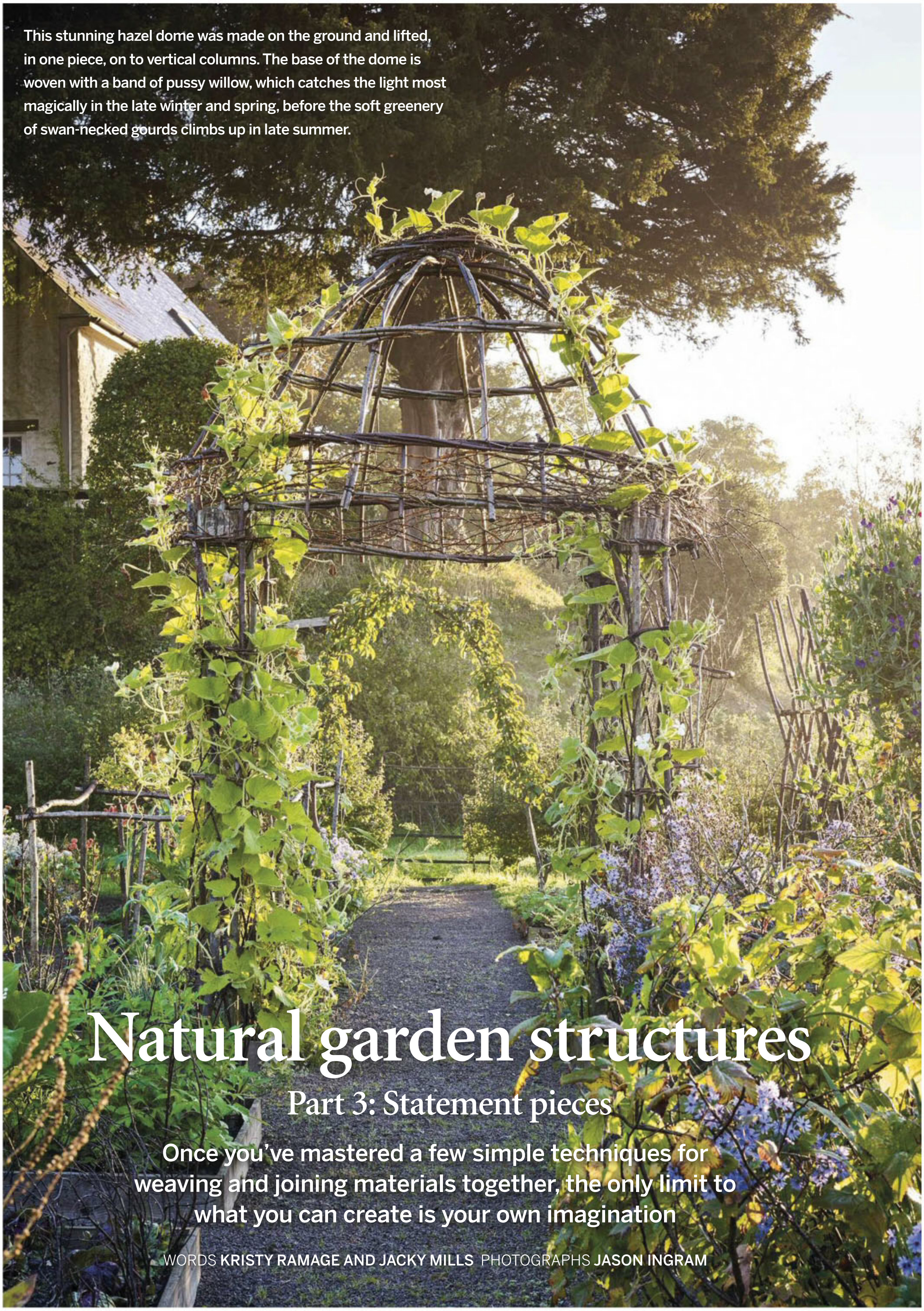
14 *Polystichum setiferum*
The soft-shield fern is a tough and amenable fern that should be part of any mixed fern border, although many of the named cultivars are also well worth growing. 1.2m. AGM. RHS H7, USDA 6a-8b.

15 *Polystichum polyblepharum*
The Japanese tassle fern derives its common name from the golden hairs that hang down from the tips of its arching fronds. Pretty and trouble-free fern for a shady or semi-shady area. 45-60cm. AGM. RHS H7, USDA 5a-8b.

16 *Gymnocarpium dryopteris* 'Plumosum'
This oak fern has delicate good looks that belie its robust constitution. Will grow best in a deep, rich soil with plenty of moisture. 22-30cm. AGM. RHS H7, USDA 2a-8b.

17 *Adiantum aleuticum* 'Miss Sharples'
A large and elegant hardy maidenhair fern. With its thin black stems, it is very similar to *Adiantum aleuticum*, but leafier and generally a fuller and more appealing form. 45-60cm. RHS H7, USDA 2a-8b.

18 *Athyrium filix-femina* 'Frizelliae'
Given moist, humus-rich soil, this British native will form impressive shuttlecocks of fresh green that grow up to 1.5m high. It works particularly well on the banks of a sheltered stream or pond. 1-1.5m. AGM. RHS H7, USDA 4a-11.



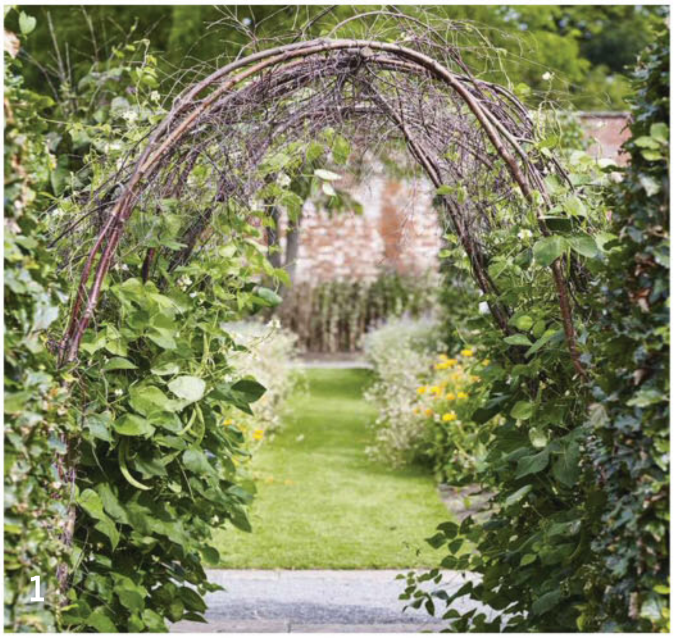
This stunning hazel dome was made on the ground and lifted, in one piece, on to vertical columns. The base of the dome is woven with a band of pussy willow, which catches the light most magically in the late winter and spring, before the soft greenery of swan-necked gourds climbs up in late summer.

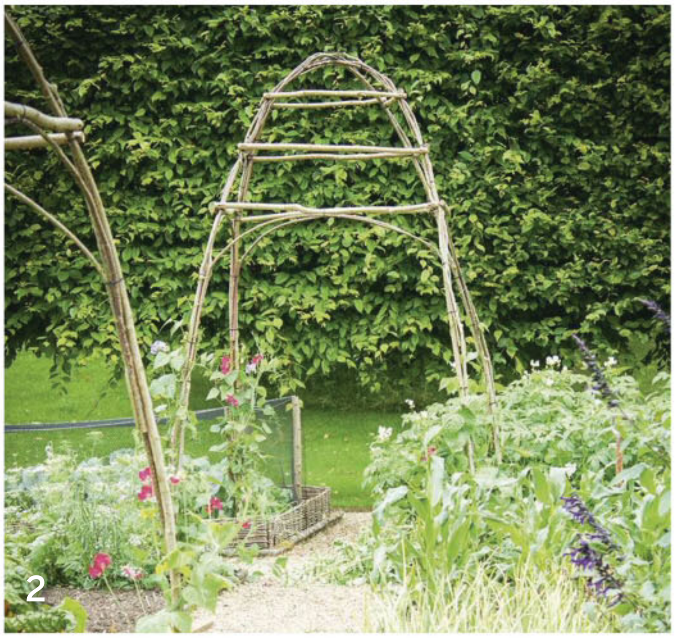
Natural garden structures

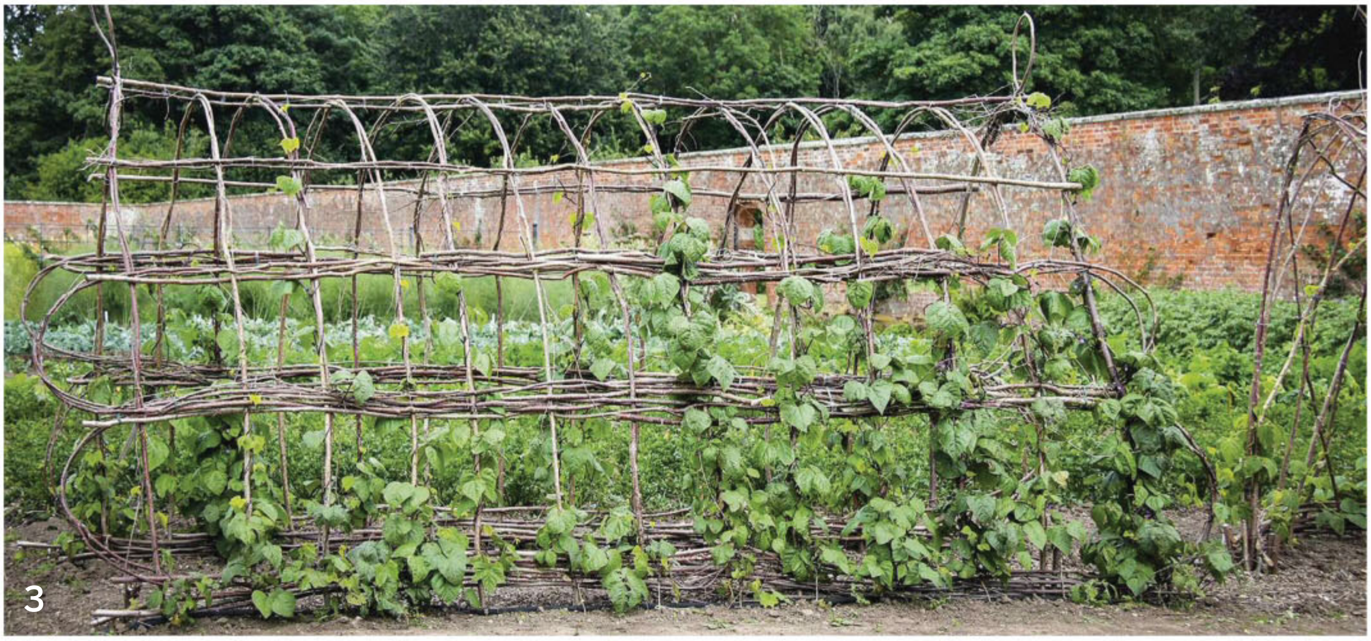
Part 3: Statement pieces

Once you've mastered a few simple techniques for weaving and joining materials together, the only limit to what you can create is your own imagination

WORDS **KRISTY RAMAGE AND JACKY MILLS** PHOTOGRAPHS **JASON INGRAM**







2. KRISTY RAMAGE. 3. KRISTY RAMAGE; LOCATION BY KIND PERMISSION OF THE NATIONAL TRUST

Arbours and tunnels

Using hazel, willow and birch you can create stunning structures that offer a sense of grandeur in places where a permanent building might be too much of a commitment. Their temporary status can also be seen as a great opportunity to experiment and have fun.

One of the joys of creating your own structures is that they are never the same from one year to the next and can be both decorative and practical. This short arbour **(1)** supports climbing beans and also forms the entrance to a hedged enclosure within a kitchen garden. It can be made each year by pushing diametrically opposed pairs of birch branches into the ground. These are then arched over each other and held in place by loosely twisting the twiggy ends around each other. Birch can make particularly soft-looking structures that are pleasing to both the eye and the gripping tendrils of climbing plants. In the kitchen garden of Rockcliffe House in Gloucestershire [look out for our feature in the May 2017 issue of *Gardens Illustrated*], head gardener Thomas Unterdorfer and his gardener Rommel use hazel to build a series of arches for the kitchen garden **(2)**. Rommel creates the pleasing vaulted shape by using four hazel rods to form a square footing, which is complemented by the simple decoration of the straight horizontals and lower single arch on each side that enclose the ‘roof canopy’. Finishing flourishes, such as the loops that join the woven rows and crown the end arches of this woven hazel tunnel **(3)** in the walled gardens at Attingham Park, Shropshire, can add a wonderful element of whimsy. Such covered structures work just as well in a small garden, because they make great use of vertical space.

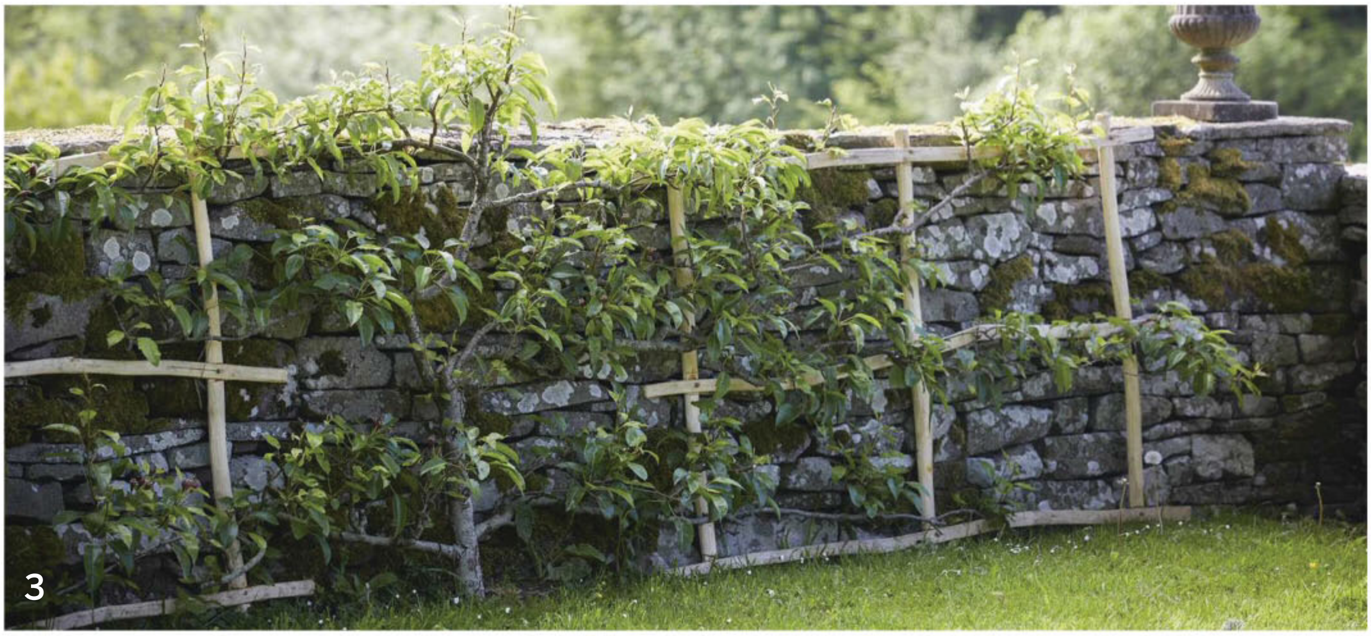
Boundary markers

Design inspiration for structures can be found in many places, but looking at local architecture will help you create forms that will sit well in their specific location. By making these features yourself, there is an added opportunity to inject them with your own personality.

Dead hedges **(1)** are traditionally created from the debris left over from forest clearance. Twiggy prunings, known as arisings, can be left to rot down between two parallel sides, which are made from longer branch wood woven between vertical stakes. This ancient form of hedging creates an ideal habitat for wildlife, especially birds and hedgehogs, while providing a convenient way to dispose of woody waste material that is unsuitable for the compost heap. Using carefully selected hazel rods, you can create more refined structures and handsome fencing. At Hampton Court Castle in Herefordshire, tall pumpkin beds **(2)** are made in situ by pushing eight vertical hazel poles into the ground to form a square, then weaving horizontal rods between them. Allowing extra length at both ends of each rod makes the weaving easier, before neatly trimming at the corners when finished. Solid poles, such as chestnut and ash, have limited weaving power, but can be split vertically using a billhook to increase pliability; even thicker material can be 'cleft' or split with an axe. Cleft chestnut is used at Great Dixter, in East Sussex, to make hurdles, which are used for everything from containing livestock to supporting herbaceous plants in the borders. At The Pant near Abergavenny, carpenter Morgan Allen (**wholewooddesigns. com**) uses cleft ash to make elegant panels **(3)** for training espalier fruit against stone walls.

1

2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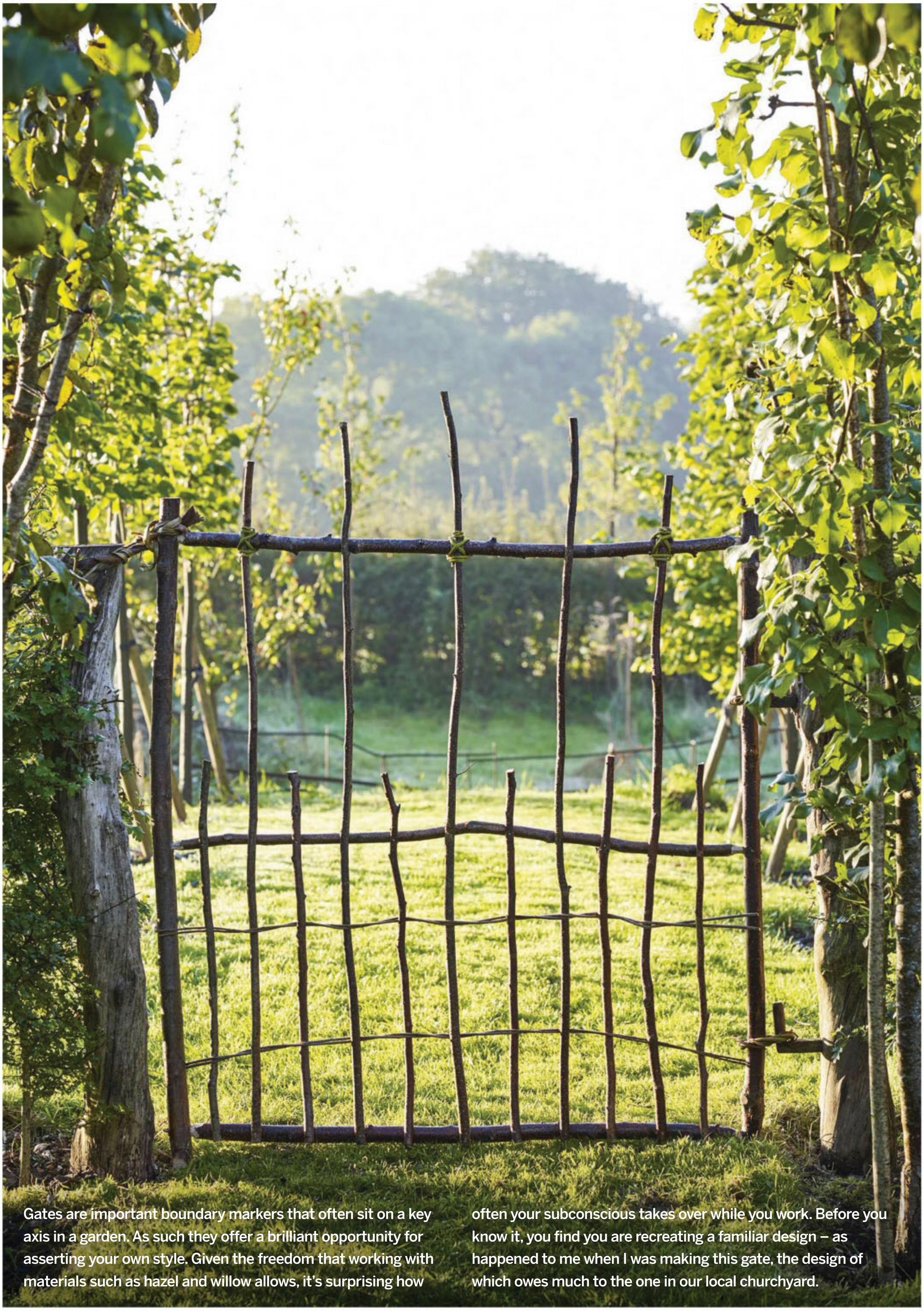
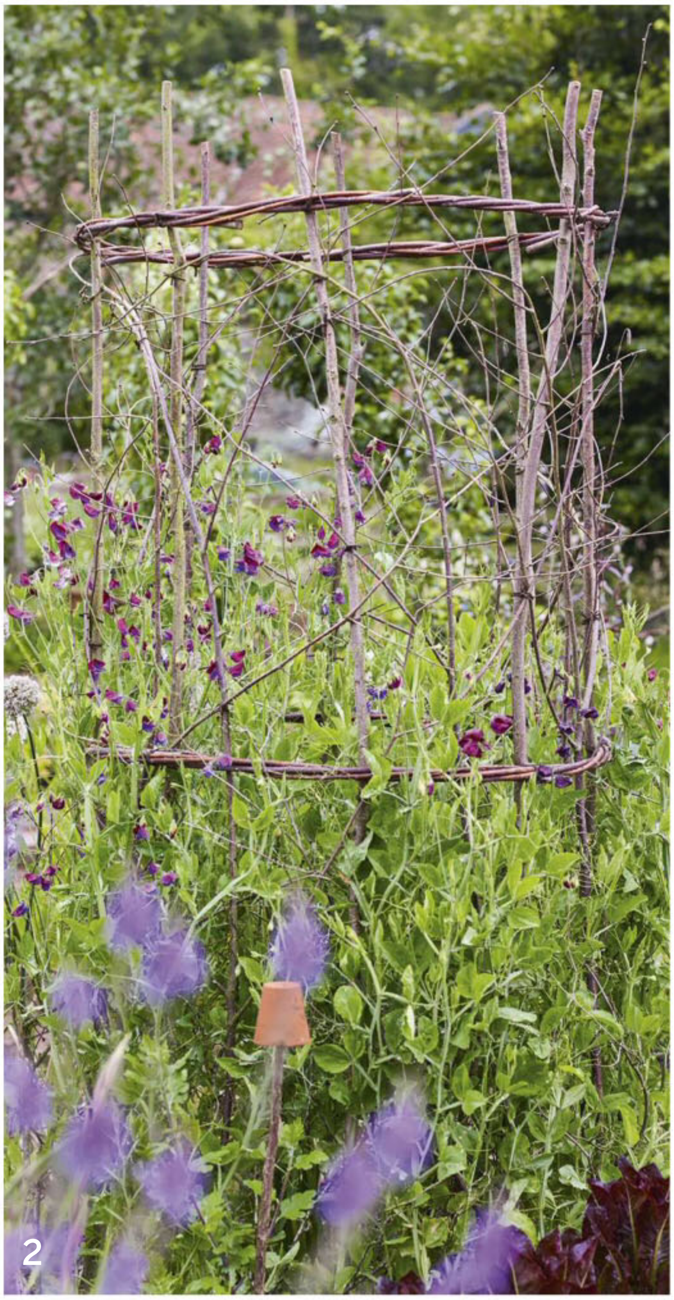
1 PAUL JACKSON; 3 BRITT WILLOUGHBY DYER

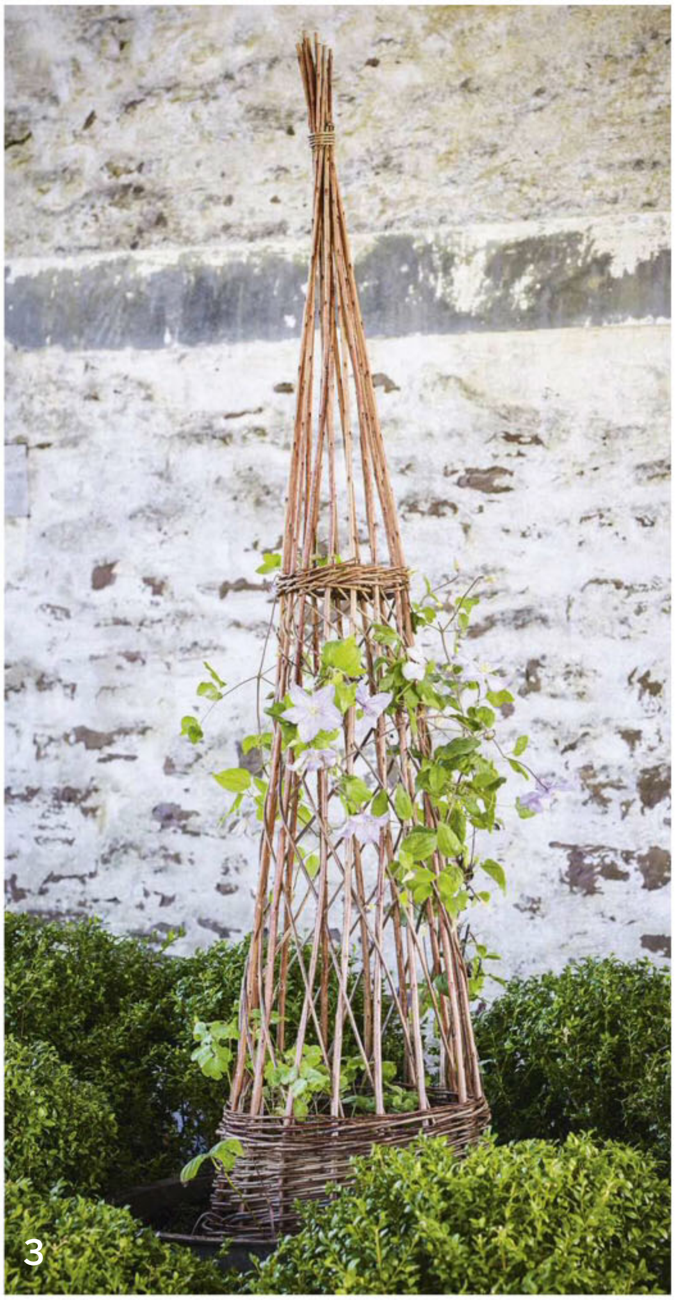


Gates are important boundary markers that often sit on a key axis in a garden. As such they offer a brilliant opportunity for asserting your own style. Given the freedom that working with materials such as hazel and willow allows, it's surprising how often your subconscious takes over while you work. Before you know it, you find you are recreating a familiar design – as happened to me when I was making this gate, the design of which owes much to the one in our local churchyard.

Gardens to visit with inspirational structures

- **Attingham Park**, Atcham,
Shrewsbury, Shropshire SY4 4TP.
Tel 01743 708123, nationaltrust.org.uk
- **Great Dixter**, Northiam, Rye, East Sussex
TN31 6PH. Tel 01797 252878, greatdixter.co.uk
- **Hampton Court Castle**, Hope-under-Dinmore, Leominster, Herefordshire HR6 0PN.
Tel 01568 797676, hamptoncourt.org.uk
- **The Pant**, Fforest Coal Pit,
Abergavenny, Gwent NP7 7LT.
Open, by appointment for private tours.
Contact camilla@camillaswift.co.uk
- **Prieuré Notre-Dame d'Orsan**,
18170 Maisonnais, France.
Tel +33 (0)2 48 56 27 50, prieuredorsan.com
- **Rockcliffe House**, Upper Slaughter,
Cheltenham, Gloucestershire GL54 2JW.
Open 7 and 28 June for NGS. ngs.org.uk





Stylish support

When you're creating eye-catching support structures, not only should you to consider the style and atmosphere of your garden, but also the habit and character of the plants they will support. Observing how a plant grows will generally suggest the best form of support.

Fruit trees can look fabulous when trained against a wall, but a free-standing, goblet-trained apple **(1)** allows the form of the plant to dominate. Simple hazel verticals, held in place with woven willow at the top and bottom, offer a discrete framework on to which the branches of the tree can be tied at regular intervals. Growing sweet peas on a simple cylinder **(2)** helps reduce the over-crowding that often occurs at the top of a traditional tepee. These hazel uprights are held in place with two twisted bands of willow, while peasticks are loosely woven through the uprights to create a twiggy support up which the sweet peas love to climb. In a more refined environment a willow obelisk **(3)** may work better. The fine, woven textures here are a good match for the sophisticated pale lilac of *Clematis* 'Prince Charles', which twines its way neatly between the lattice work of the structure. This deciduous vine is cut back hard in February; a more vigorous clematis would overwhelm such a delicate structure and work better on a hazel tripod. All of these structures bring to the garden a sense of the gardener's care and involvement. There is great satisfaction in creating something that belongs uniquely to your own garden but is also part of a long tradition. Early woodcuts show gardeners hard at work using these same natural materials to make fences and gates, or arbours and delicate woven supports for treasured plants in pots. They too would have stood back at the end of the day, a little more calloused of hand perhaps, but no doubt pleased by what their efforts had produced. ☐

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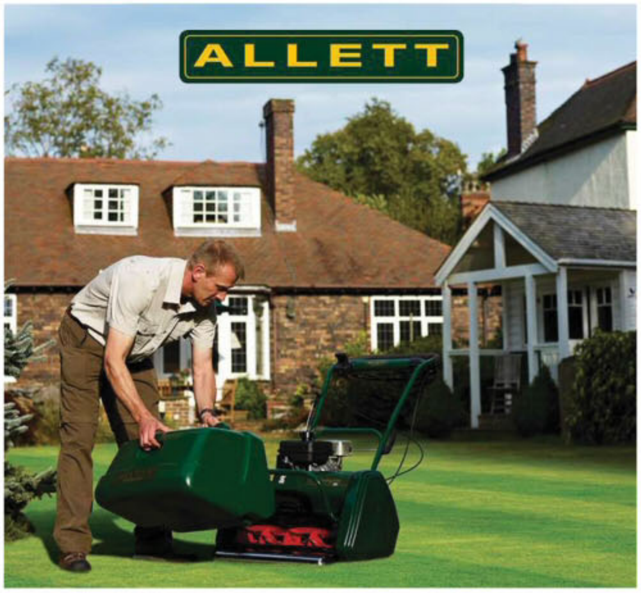

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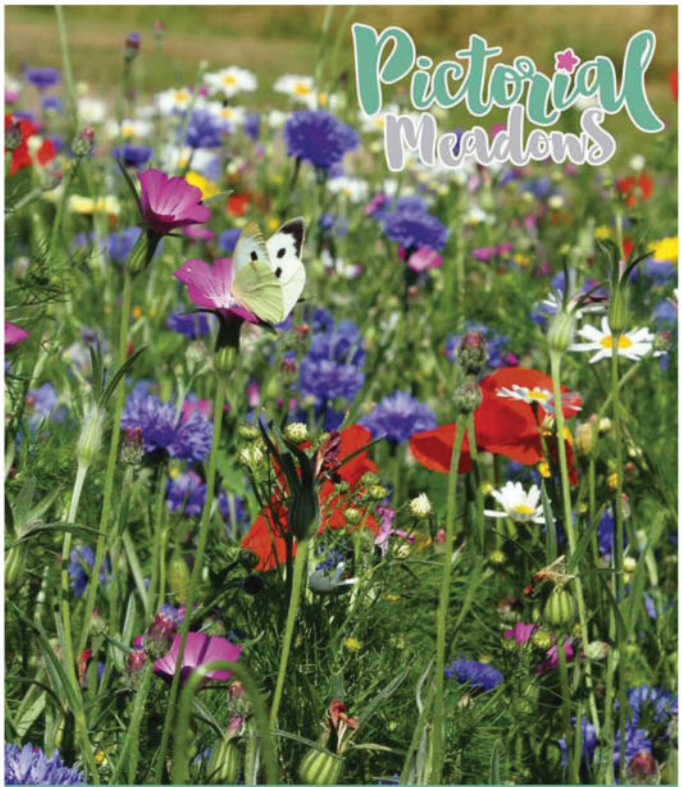

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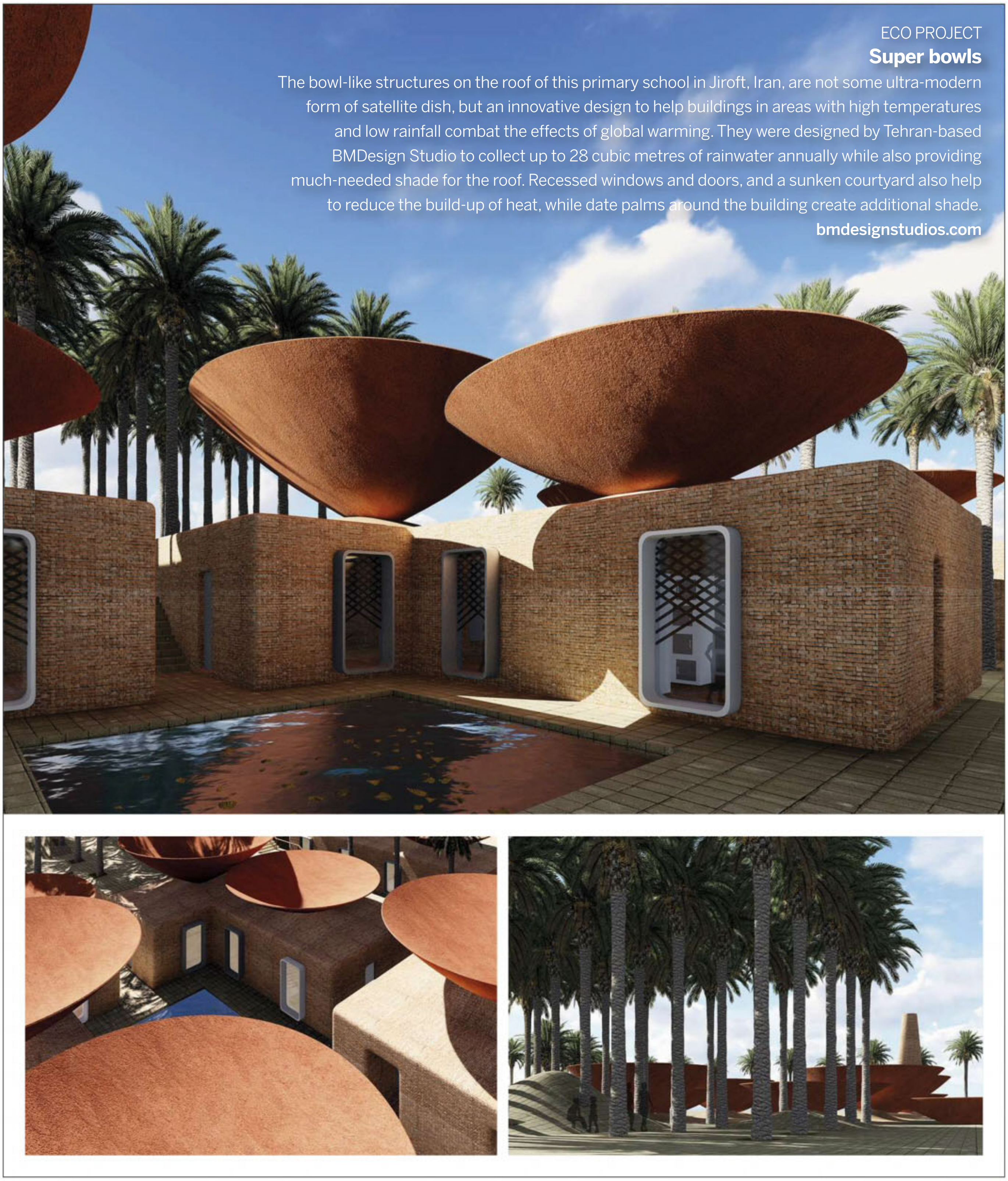

ECO PROJECT

Super bowls

The bowl-like structures on the roof of this primary school in Jiroft, Iran, are not some ultra-modern form of satellite dish, but an innovative design to help buildings in areas with high temperatures and low rainfall combat the effects of global warming. They were designed by Tehran-based BMDesign Studio to collect up to 28 cubic metres of rainwater annually while also providing much-needed shade for the roof. Recessed windows and doors, and a sunken courtyard also help to reduce the build-up of heat, while date palms around the building create additional shade.

bmdesignstudios.com

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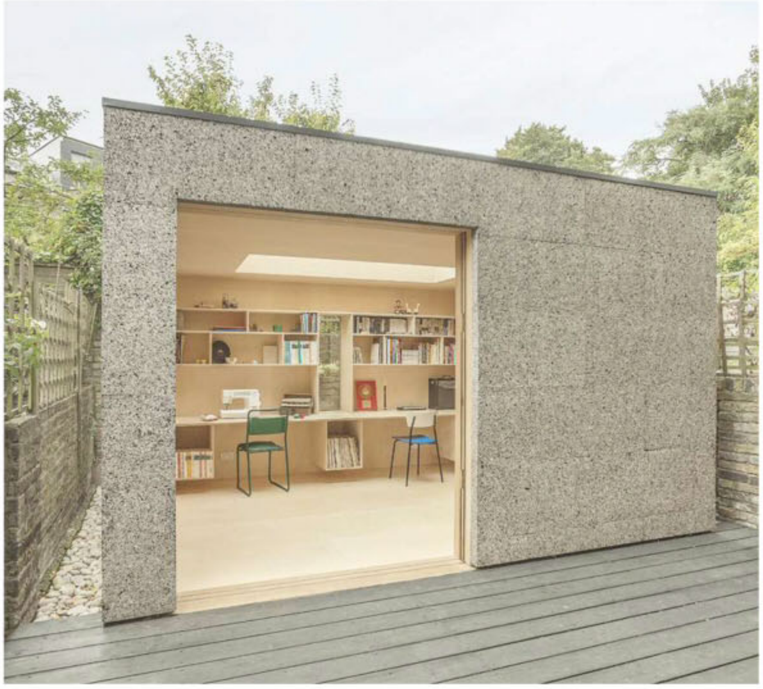


GARDEN ROOM

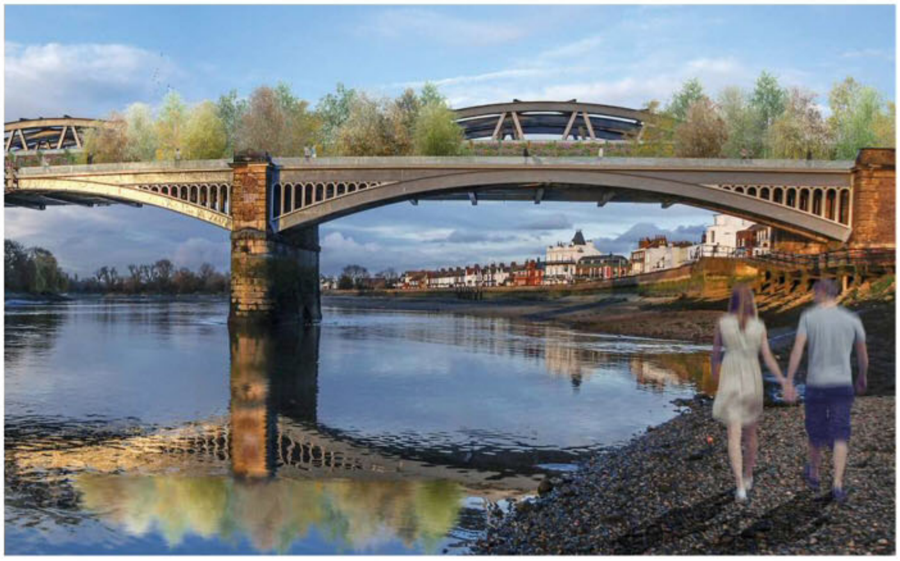
A study in cork

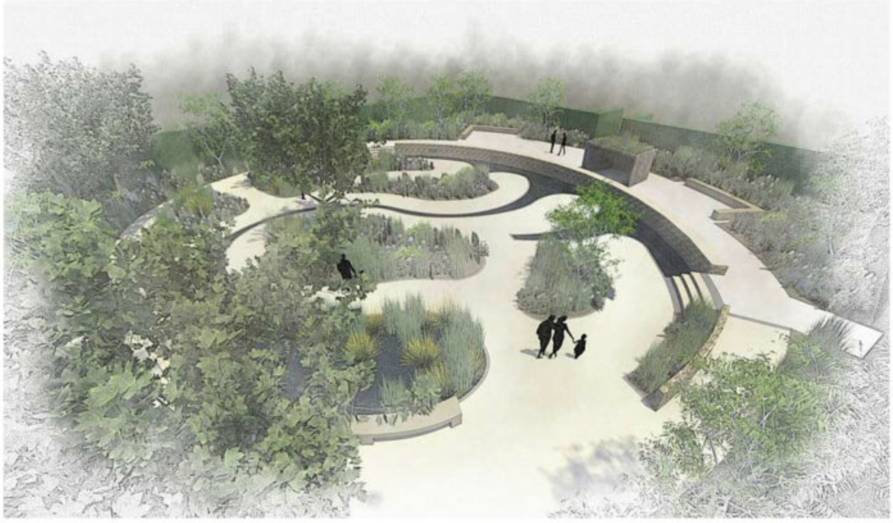
A new design for a garden room by London architects Surman Weston uses cork cladding for thermal and acoustic insulation. The studio, in a compact north London garden, has a floor space of just 13 square metres but cantilevered worktops allow room for two workstations, while a generous skylight floods the room with natural light. A sedum roof softens its impact from above. **surmanweston.com**

URBAN IMPROVEMENT

Bridging the gap

Plans for a garden walkway on Barnes Railway Bridge in London have been drawn up by architectural practice One-World Design. The green promenade is planned for an unused part of the bridge, which crosses the Thames between Barnes and Chiswick, and could feature trees grown in planters and a living screen to separate the walkway from the railway line. It's the brainchild of local resident Peter Barnes who has played a key role in the Victorian bridge's restoration. The next step will be to carry out a feasibility study. **one-worlddesign.co.uk**



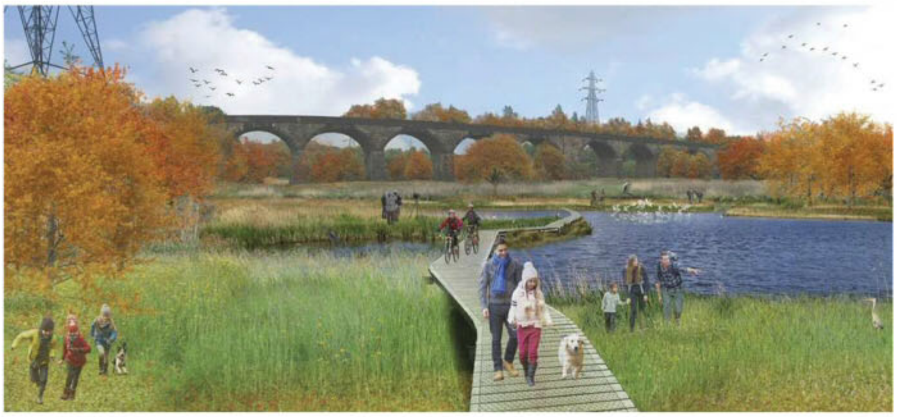


NEW GARDEN

Into a spin

A new design has been commissioned by the RHS for the Spiral Garden at Rosemoor in Devon. Designer Jo Thompson has worked with the damp site, which sits towards the bottom of a slope, by channelling the water into organic shaped rills. The longest of these flows into an area of bog planting with a cool colour scheme that will be a restful contrast to the hues in the nearby Hot Garden. Generous sandstone terraces will allow visitors to circulate. Work is planned to begin at the end of this year. **rhs.org.uk/gardens/rosemoor**

WAI MING NG, ONE-WORLD DESIGN ARCHITECTS, JO THOMPSON



PARK DEVELOPMENT

Space to unwind

Plans to create an 800-acre Forest Park on the edge of Manchester have been announced by the charity City of Trees. Ten years ago thousands of trees were planted on the former industrial site and now the charity wants to develop the space by planting more trees, creating wildflower meadows and establishing orchards and edible hedgerows. Paths and cycle ways will link the park with other parts of the city and it's hoped it will include space for culture and the arts. **cityoftrees.org.uk/cityforestparkmcr**

SGD AWARDS

Winning curves

A design by Lulu Urqhart and Adam Hunt, in collaboration with Susan Campbell, to transform the Tudor Walled Kitchen Garden at London's Fulham Palace, has won the Historic Garden Restoration award at the 2016 Society of Garden Designers Awards. The productive organic garden features reinstated curved glasshouses and a new knot garden layout. **sgd.org.uk**

ROCK GARDEN

Get ready to while away some summer hours in this stylish new Parc rocking chair from Danish designers Cane-Line. The powder-coated aluminium base gives it a cool contemporary look while the slatted teak seat is contoured for comfort. It costs £710 from barbed.co.uk

Visit cane-line.co.uk for other UK stockists.

Notebook

- If you're visiting the American Midwest this spring or summer, don't miss ***Ai Weiwei at Meijer Gardens: Natural State*** at the Frederik Meijer Gardens and Sculpture Park in Michigan. The landmark exhibition features 30 of the sculptor's works, including *Iron Tree*, his largest and most complex outdoor sculpture to date, which was installed in the gardens in 2015. Until 20 August, meijergardens.org
- Learn how to make **structures out of living willow** with Surrey willow weaver Nicki Rowling in a series of short workshops at RHS Gardens Wisley. From 8 March. Tel 020 3176 5830, rhs.org.uk/gardens/wisley
- Make a date to visit an extraordinary two-acre garden in the Cambridgeshire village of **Balsham**, which opens for the first time for the NGS on 26 March. The tree-rich garden has a yew maze, planted in the shape of a treble clef, and paved areas shaped like French horns, and also features spring bulbs, a wildflower meadow and modern sculptures. 2a Nine Chimneys Lane, Balsham, Cambridgeshire CB21 4ES. Also open 25 June, and by appointment. ngs.org.uk
- A competition to design a Main Avenue garden at **RHS Chelsea Flower Show 2020**, to celebrate the centenary of Welwyn Garden City, has been announced. Submissions must be received by 31 March 2017. See sgd.org.uk/industry-news for details.
- Book now to secure your place on tours of some stunning private gardens opening in May and June to raise money for the gardeners' charity **Perennial**. This year's highlights include Tirley Garth in Cheshire (17 May), Barnett Hill in Surrey (1 June) and Mount St John in Yorkshire (16 June). perennial.org.uk

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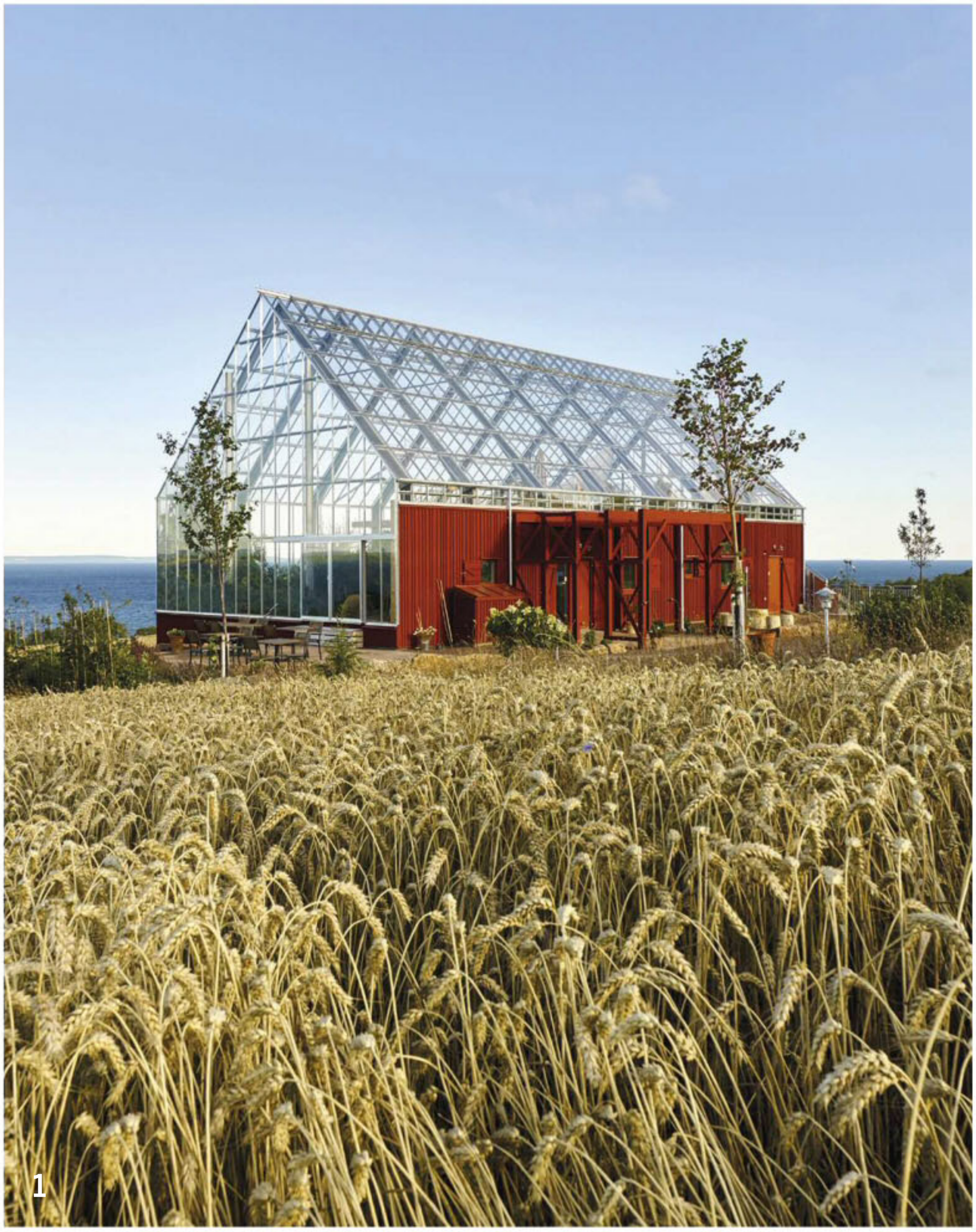
1 Scandi cool

You have to hand it to those Swedes – their buildings can be pretty impressive. This is a case in point: half timber building, half greenhouse, the idea is to be as sustainable as possible, with large beds nourished by recycled waste. And it comes with amazing views over Lake Vättern.

2 Start small

An excellent solution for the smaller garden: this potting shed from Gabriel Ash combines a tool shed with a tiny lean-to greenhouse. You may not manage to grow everything your heart ever desired, but at least you can make a start without surrendering valuable storage space.



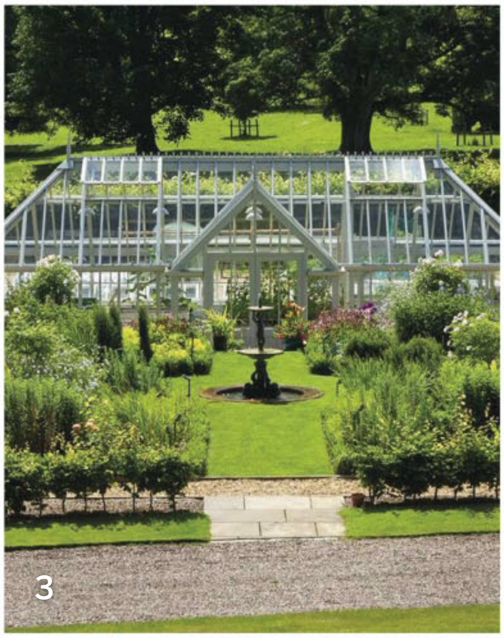
ULF CELANDER

James Alexander-Sinclair is a garden designer, writer, broadcaster and founder of into-gardens.com. He has served on the RHS Council for the past five years.

Clear advantages

Which of us has never turned green with envy over an impeccably ordered greenhouse? James Alexander-Sinclair covets the grown-up gardener's ultimate accessory

WORDS JAMES ALEXANDER-SINCLAIR



JAMES WHITE, ALITEX LTD, MARK BOLTON, DIVOOE ZEIN ARCHITECTS

3 In your dreams

This is everybody's vision of a dreamy glasshouse: more than enough space for everything and a rather wonderful surrounding garden. Designed, constructed and erected by Alitex, it is so smart that nobody would ever dare leave empty compost bags and old pots shoved under the potting benches.

4 Glory days

Once upon a time, all walled gardens looked like this, with elegantly stepped glasshouses along the sun-warmed walls. Housing everything from pineapples to winter-flowering house plants and glowing tomatoes, this survivor can be found at Miserden Nursery in Gloucestershire.

5 Shady character

This is not strictly speaking a glasshouse; rather, it is made of mesh and is intended to nurture shady woodland species, so the idea of hot sun and glass is complete anathema. The trees go straight through the mesh and the house covers an entire glade. It was designed by Divooe Zein Architects for a site in Taiwan.

Dislodging the crisped remains of last autumn's leaf fall, she pressed lightly on the old door, which swung open with a groan of relief. She stepped through and stopped, mesmerised by the lichened glasshouse that leaned, exhausted, against the mellow brick walls. Just visible through the tumbling vine a tousled gardener could be seen tending to his cuttings. "Monty," she breathed as he turned his gentian-blue eyes upon her, and she knew that this was the beginning of something wonderful…' There, a bit of romantic fiction. What better way to start a piece about that most covetable of garden accessories, the greenhouse?

A greenhouse is capable of inspiring more garden envy than anything else. Other people may have sickeningly perfect borders, or gobsmackingly green lawns, but to wander into a perfectly organised greenhouse smelling of warm humidity is a different experience. The first time I peered into the glasshouses at West Dean Gardens in Sussex, I was consumed by covetous awe at the serried rows of chillies and perfectly trained cordons of tomatoes. It was a truly life-enhancing moment. I have only recently acquired a greenhouse of my own and, although I am resigned to the reality that it will never measure up to the one at West Dean, it does give me enormous pleasure. Cuttings are taken, succulents are sheltered and cucumbers are grown. After progressing from sunflower competitions to window boxes to mixed borders, the next logical step is to own a greenhouse of one's own.

I suppose that the father of the glasshouse is the extraordinary Joseph Paxton, who started off at Chatsworth, in Derbyshire, building forcing frames and finished by designing the Crystal Palace in Hyde Park, London (his original design sketched out

▷

6 Place to call home

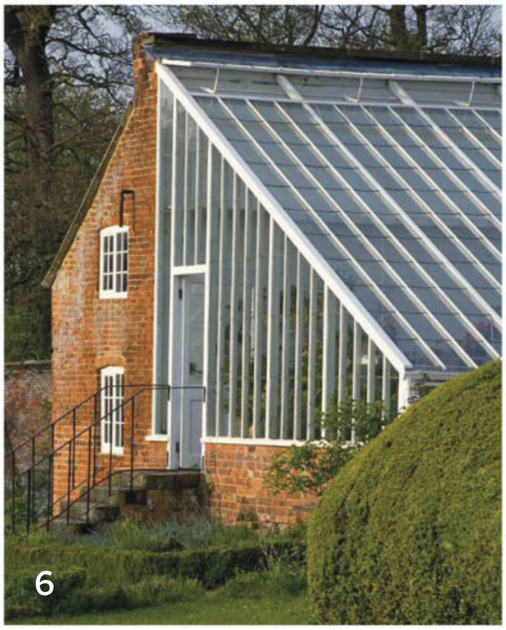
This is in the excellent walled garden at Kelmarsh Hall in Northamptonshire where the interior designer Nancy Lancaster lived, decorated and gardened in the early 20th century. It is half glasshouse and half gardener's cottage. Nowadays the walled garden has fewer vegetables, but is packed with an extraordinarily colourful fandango of dahlias.

7 Pure and simple

I really like this idea from Pure Greenhouses: a glasshouse with no timbers, rafters or struts. Just thick slabs of glass held together with chunky stainless-steel fixings. Not really one for the traditionalists, but a perfect companion to the smaller, more modern garden.

8 Space-saver

Not all greenhouses have to be rectangular. This is a very handsome gothic arched house by Serres et Ferronneries d'Antan (French, obviously). This is the Petite Potagère model, which comes with very elegant bamboo blinds to protect your seedlings from the midday sun. This is a really good solution for the space-strapped gardener.



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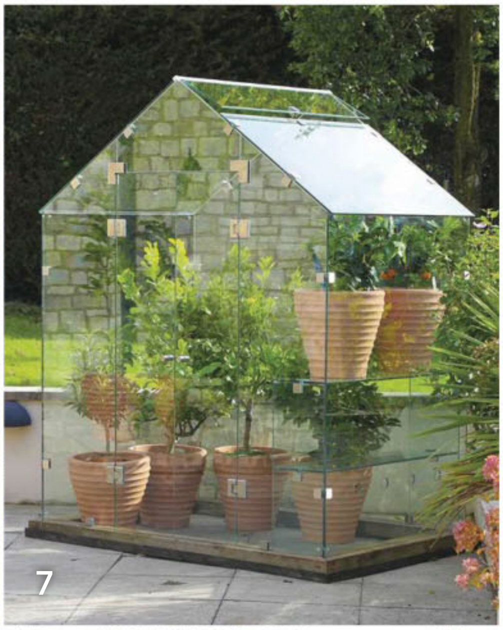

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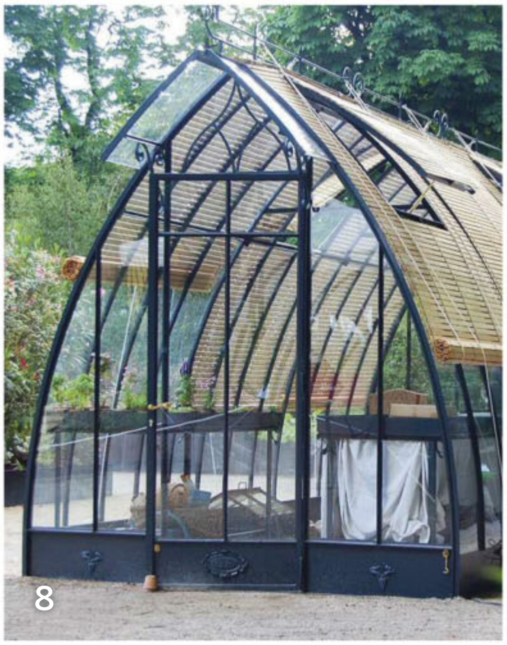

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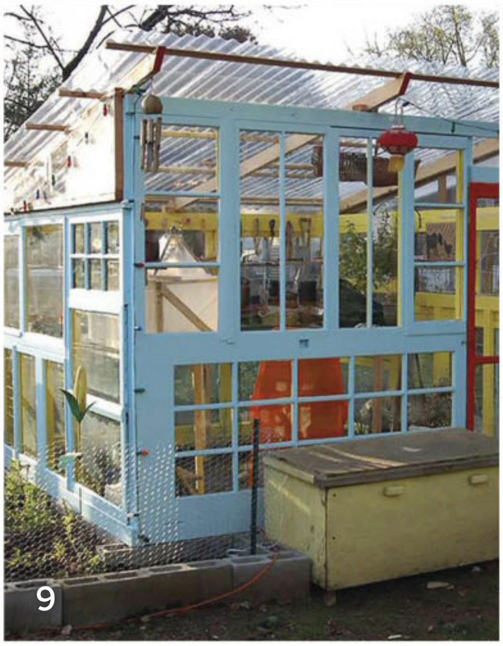

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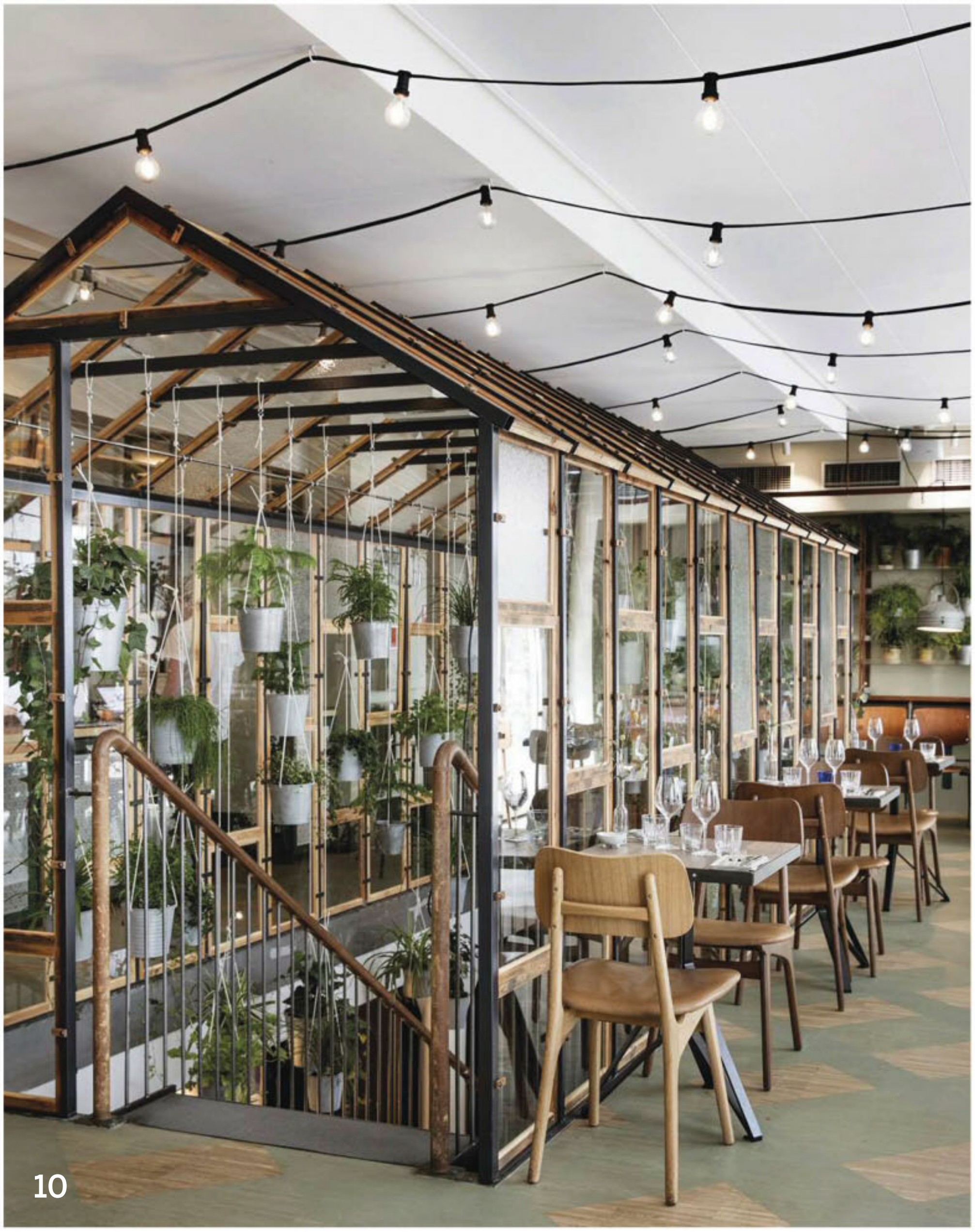
CLIVE NICHOLS, MARK EMANS, SERRES ET FERRONNERIES D'ANTAN, MAGGIE KEARNS/PAPAVER STUDIO

▷ on a blotter can still be seen at the Victoria and Albert Museum). He was one of those Victorian polymaths who did all this as well as publishing a magazine and being a Member of Parliament.

Greenhouses come in different guises, depending on what they are for, what you want them to look like and how handy you are with a power tool. Basically, you can break them down into three categories: the spiffy, the practical and the homemade.

The first are those purveyed in large glossy advertisements and on trade stands at Chelsea. I mention no names, but you can guess who the manufacturers are: their buildings are beautifully made and quite expensive. They straddle the gap between greenhouse and conservatory and can be used for both lounging around on rattan sofas sipping brandy alexanders and for serious plant growing. These are the direct descendants of the old Victorian greenhouses and can be fitted out with underfloor heating pipes and all manner of curlicues. The practical variety are made of sensible things, such as cedar or naked aluminium. They may not be pretty enough to be the focal point of a vista or the centrepiece of a walled garden, but that is not really their purpose: these are businesslike structures that are designed purely for growing tomatoes or nurturing cuttings. The homemade, meanwhile, are often found on allotments and are a mixture of ingenious craftsmanship and upcycled materials. Rejected window frames and floorboards rescued from skips are miraculously transformed: charming, but not always weatherproof.

The siting of your greenhouse is very important: try not to put it under a tree and avoid slopes, which make construction tricky. If you are growing standard summer crops, it is best to run it north to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CHRIS TONNESEN

9 Upcycled chic

A perfect example of the craft of scavenging. Assorted mismatched doors and window frames have been given a lick of paint and reassembled into a greenhouse that is not only functional but postitively joyful. Perhaps a bit out of place outside a château, but absolutely perfect for an allotment.

10 Outside in

It is a great idea to have a greenhouse inside a building – it gives you extra insulation. Here, the greenhouse covers the stairs and is populated by lots of plants dangling like stranded abseilers from the ceiling. It may not be the best idea for the average house, but it works well for the Väkst Restaurant in Copenhagen.

Further reading

The Greenhouse Expert by Dr DG Hessayon (Expert, 1994) – great for the beginner.

Vegetables and Herbs for the Greenhouse and Polytunnel by Klaus Laitenberger (Right Way, 2013) – how to grow tasty year-round produce.

south, as this will give equal sunshine on both sides and may stop overheating. If you need maximum light all year round (perhaps for alpines), site it east to west for the best light on dingy winter days.

If you have always yearned for somewhere warm to cosset your cotyledons or grow more tomatoes than you could ever eat, you need a greenhouse. Life is short: greenhouses are a healthy extravagance, not at all fattening and are good for the soul. Provided you throw no stones. ◻

READER EVENT

Don't miss James's talk on Sex, Death and Gardens at the *Gardens Illustrated* Festival, 25-26 March 2017. See page 9 or go to **gardensfestival.com** for details.

Where to buy

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DAVID HARBER SCULPTURES – STAND 52

Award-winning sculpture that responds to its environment. David began his career making sundials and his fascination with celestial movements has always guided his work. Arguably it was something that was born in his blood – he is the direct descendant of John Blagrave, the Elizabethan mathematician and scientific instrument maker whose workshop was only a few miles from where David first started making sundials.

Inspired by the elemental interaction of light, landscape and water, David uses contemporary design to create sculptures, sundials and water features. Using materials such as copper, bronze, stainless steel and stone, every piece is made in his Oxfordshire workshop where he has built up a team that possess exceptional breadth of knowledge and skill.

These artworks are designed to evolve with the landscape, to change with the seasons and to interact with the environment, giving a true sense of place and time – 'People with no time to spare become spellbound when you show them an altered reality in the fabric of a sculpture', he says, and this truly is one of the most important roles of art today: to force us to pause and contemplate.

David's work can be viewed at his semi-permanent exhibition in the private gardens of Eaton Square but for the full experience, David will happily show you around his workshop and studio in Oxfordshire.

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Book reviews, crossword, back issues, shop

Harold Nicolson and Vita Sackville-West, pictured here on the steps at Sissinghurst in 1960, are featured in *Lives of The Great Gardeners* by Stephen Anderton, which is reviewed on page 106.

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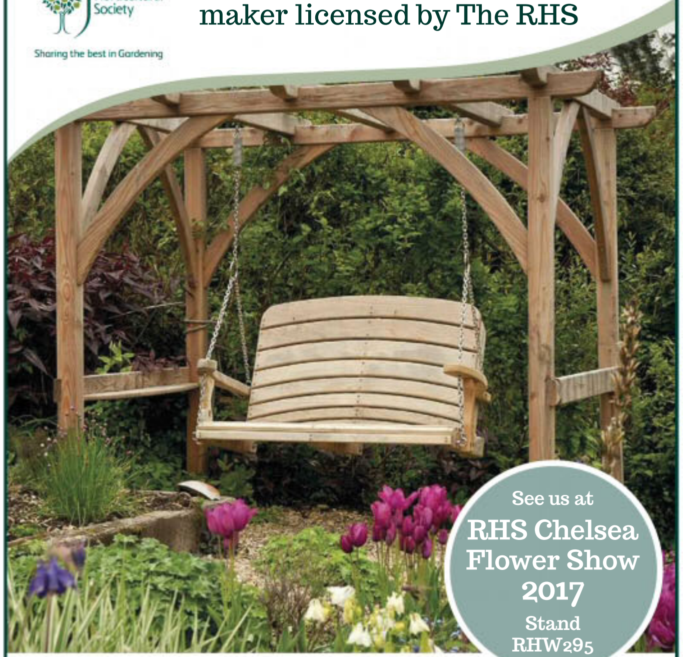

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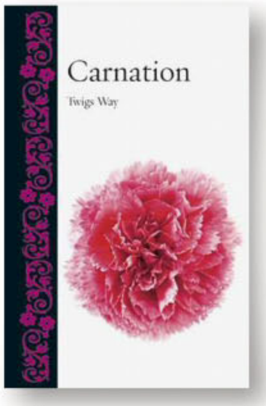


CARNATION
by Twigs Way

Reaktion Books, £16

ISBN 978-1780236346

A well-researched, lively and often amusing survey of the different roles the carnation has played across many cultures.

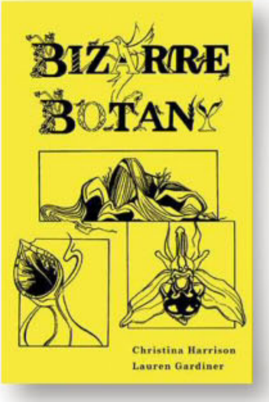
Reviewer John Hoyland is a writer and plantsman.

Once a plant popular with both paupers and princes, the carnation is usually only seen today in cellophane-wrapped bouquets on petrol-station forecourts. Twigs Way's book looks at the cultural, social and horticultural importance of these plants and reminds us how beautiful they, and other members of the genus, are.

Dianthus includes carnations, sweet williams and pinks, although the distinction between them is sometimes muddied. Way describes the symbolism of pinks (the word is derived not from the colour of the flower but from the pinking on the edges of the petals) in early Christian painting as well as in Islamic art. She goes on to trace the use of the carnation's image, from 18th-century embroidery, to the lapels of Oscar Wilde's supporters, and to adverts for evaporated milk.

The most engaging aspects of the book are the lively accounts of the characters and organisations involved in the story of carnations. Nurserymen, amateur plant breeders and royal enthusiasts are all vividly brought to life. The book is filled with captivating stories, such as those about the Bacchanalian activities of some 18th-century carnation fanciers, and the tragedy of US President McKinley, who was assassinated minutes after giving away his lucky carnation buttonhole.

The book is part of the 'Botanics' series from Reaktion Books and, like the other books in the series, is not a gardening handbook. It won't explain how to cultivate *Dianthus* or what species and cultivars to grow. What it will do is give you a fascinating insight into the history of the flower, the important personalities in its story and the significance and meanings that the plant has acquired. It is a book that will breathe life into those sad forecourt bouquets.



BIZARRE BOTANY
by Christina Harrison and
Lauren Gardiner

Kew Publishing, £10
ISBN 978-1842466148

An intriguing A to Z of botanical enquiry, packed with astonishing facts from the world of plants – and far beyond.

Reviewer Ambra Edwards is a writer and garden historian.

'Surprise is the greatest gift which life can grant us,' wrote the Russian poet and novelist Boris Pasternak. In which case, being a botanist at Kew must be the richest life on earth: every page of this intriguing book is packed with wonder.

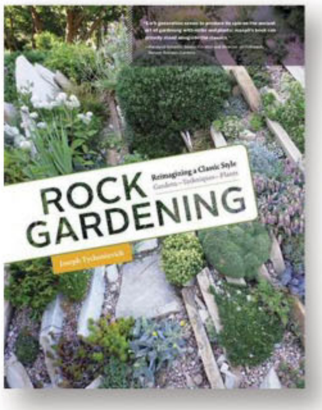
Did you know, for example, that six ginkgo trees continue to grow just a mile from the centre of Hiroshima, having survived the atomic blast? Or that some plants add caffeine to their nectar, to help honeybees remember where to find them? That there are plants that feed on worms, and others pollinated by gerbils? Who would have thought that a leaf could live for 500 years?

Information ranges far and wide, taking in baking (how gluten affects the rise of bread), to ethnography (poisons, penis gourds and the origins of gin and tonic). 'Going to Scarborough Fair' turns out to be a euphemism for fornication. (A decoction of parsley, sage, rosemary and thyme was believed to induce abortion.) While a strand on Botany Heroes adds lesser-known female names, such as Harriet Margaret Louisa Bolus and Lilian Suzette Gibbs, to the roll call of the greats.

This is a book that will delight not only plant lovers and naturalists, but quizzers, and collectors of wondrous new words (zoophilous, herbivory, pyroclastic, ultramaphic) – or indeed anyone over the age of ten with an enquiring mind.

There is in-depth science here (the writers have drawn on the expertise of their colleagues at Kew), made briskly accessible in a tone that offers clarity without condescension. The alarming facts of how climate change and environmental degradation are decimating the plant kingdom are presented urgently, but without drama. So there is seriousness and scholarship in this book too.

Book reviews



ROCK GARDENING
by Joseph Tychonievich

Timber Press
ISBN 978-1604695878

A good read for anyone wishing to delve into the alpine world, with sound advice on many aspects of alpine gardening.

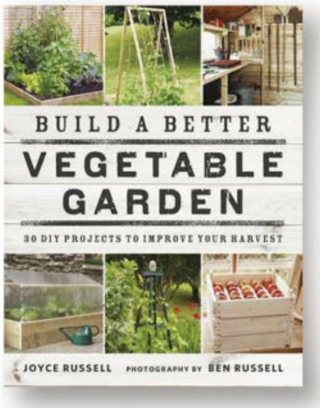
Reviewer Annie Guilfoyle is a garden designer and writer.

When asked to write a review for this book, I leapt at it. I love alpines, but really need to know more about them; I want to know why they are not more popular and am particularly interested in seeing them used in a contemporary context. I was hopeful that this book would answer these questions.

Tychonievich writes with such enthusiasm that his passion is utterly infectious. From his opening line, 'A warm welcome to the fascinating world of gardening among rocks', I felt as if I was being led by the hand, with him chatting excitedly beside me. He explains how alpine gardening is surging in popularity and how it suits the modern lifestyle (particularly where people have little time and space, such as the urban gardener with a small balcony), or those living in a challengingly dry climate. Tychonievich himself lives and gardens in the USA, but has flitted back and forth across the Atlantic visiting a diverse range of rock gardens from Oregon to Lancashire.

The book has been divided into three sections: Gardens, Techniques and Plants. Spread throughout the first section are useful information boxes covering subjects from 'hiring a designer' to 'growing for show'. Horticultural techniques and a range of alpine plants fill the next two sections.

'My number one goal in writing this book was to go big and broad, not merely to write about how I rock garden in my specific climate here in Michigan,' writes Tychonievich. This book is perfect for someone relatively new to alpine gardening, no matter which side of the Atlantic they live on, but I would have loved to have seen some examples of the more contemporary and unusual alpine gardens that are now emerging all around the world.



BUILD A BETTER VEGETABLE GARDEN: 30 DIY PROJECTS TO IMPROVE YOUR HARVEST

by Joyce Russell,
photographs by Ben Russell

Frances Lincoln
ISBN 978-0711238428

An introduction to woodworking focussed on the kitchen garden, combining practical advice with step-by-step projects.

Reviewer Jojo Tulloh is a garden writer.

If you are a practical person it can be galling to discover that there are some areas where you have no idea where to begin. Woodworking, unlike cookery or gardening, requires certain skills (not to mention tools) that deter the ignorant from just muddling through. This book offers focussed, practical advice and is aimed at the complete beginner. There is a good range of projects all made from scratch, from planters, to raised beds, to fruit cages and box planters.

Produced by the husband and wife team behind the best selling *The Polytunnel Book*, this book aims to increase productivity by deterring pests, protecting crops and extending your growing season, while also providing growing advice and woodworking tips.

Joyce describes herself as a 'build it fast to fulfil the task' kind of carpenter, while her husband, Ben, is more of a craftsman. Their book offers the best of both of these approaches.

The introductory section on tools and techniques will help you understand what you need to get going. You learn which wood to buy, how to draw accurate lines, and to cut, level, and drill. The first project (creating support for broad beans), is simple but a good example of how well-built structures produce stronger plants. Some projects use hazel poles and other coppiced wood so you can practise your skills without spending a fortune on more expensive timber. Other useful projects include a simple poly-cloche tunnel made with galvanised pipe, and a copper-bottom cold frame. Clear instructions and step-by-step photographs illustrate every project. There is a good mix of practical versus more decorative projects and, aside from the money saved, the joy of making these things is that you can design them to fit your plot.

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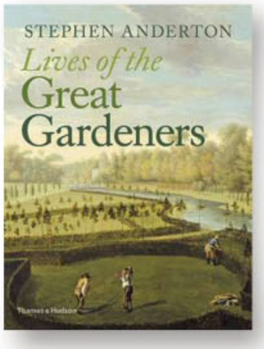

STEPHEN ANDERTON
Lives of the Great Gardeners
Thames & Hudson

LIVES OF THE GREAT GARDENERS

by Stephen Anderton

Thames & Hudson, £24.95
ISBN 978-0500518564

An erudite and entertaining exploration of the lives of 40 great gardeners, set in the context of the age in which each lived.

Reviewer Jodie Jones is a garden writer and editor.

There is nothing like a list to get people going, and those who consider themselves experts will have a lovely time quibbling with Stephen Anderton's selection of just 40 great gardeners out of the many he could have picked from the past 500 years. Should Claude Monet be included when Tom Stuart-Smith is not? Do Sir Edwin Lutyens and Gertrude Jekyll really warrant a chapter each? But Anderton knows his stuff, and makes a lively case for everyone he chooses to devote space to. Anderton is an engaging raconteur in person, and on paper he loses none of his lightness of touch.

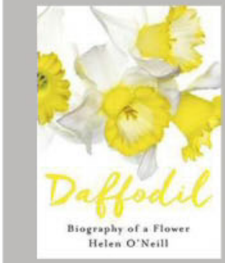
Rather than taking a chronological approach, he has divided the book into four thematic sections: Ideas, Straight Lines, Curves, Plantsmanship. This proves to be a most effective sorting mechanism, and brings together some interesting bedfellows. Wen Zhengming, a 15th-century Chinese gardener, painter and poet; American President Thomas Jefferson; and flamboyant former V&A director Sir Roy Strong all meet in Gardens of Ideas. Gardens of Curves includes 'Capability' Brown (whom Anderton describes as being 'in the right place at the right time'), Modernist visionary Thomas Church and steam enthusiast and creator of the island bed, Alan Bloom.

Each biographical entry opens with a gloriously random list of events that occurred in the year in which each gardener was born and (where relevant) died. Much has been written about Hidcote, but who knew that its creator, Lawrence Johnston, died in the same year (1958) that Pope Pius XII declared St Clare the patron saint of television?

Anyone interested in broadening their knowledge of garden history will find this a fascinating introduction to an absorbing subject. ☐

Other books

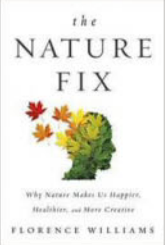
New titles whose subjects cover the influence of the daffodil, tips for organic gardening and why nature makes us happy.


Daffodil
Biography of a Flower
Helen O'Neill

DAFFODIL: BIOGRAPHY OF A FLOWER

by Helen O'Neill
Fourth Estate, £18.99
ISBN 978-0732299200

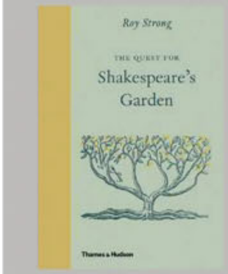
An illustrated book looking at why daffodils have inspired poets, artists and scientists through the ages.


the NATURE FIX
Why Nature Makes Us Happier, Healthier, and More Creative
FLORENCE WILLIAMS

THE NATURE FIX

by Florence Williams
WW Norton & Company, £20
ISBN 978-0393242713

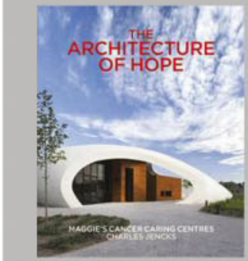
A quest to uncover the science behind nature's positive effects on the brain, at a time when our lives revolve around indoor environments.


Roy Strong
THE QUEST FOR
Shakespeare's Garden
Thames & Hudson

THE QUEST FOR SHAKESPEARE'S GARDEN

by Roy Strong
Thames & Hudson, £14.95
ISBN 978-0500252246

An investigation into Shakespeare's use of garden imagery to tell a tale of the Bard's own Stratford garden.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by Charles Jencks and Edwin Heathcote
Frances Lincoln, £35
ISBN 978-0711225978

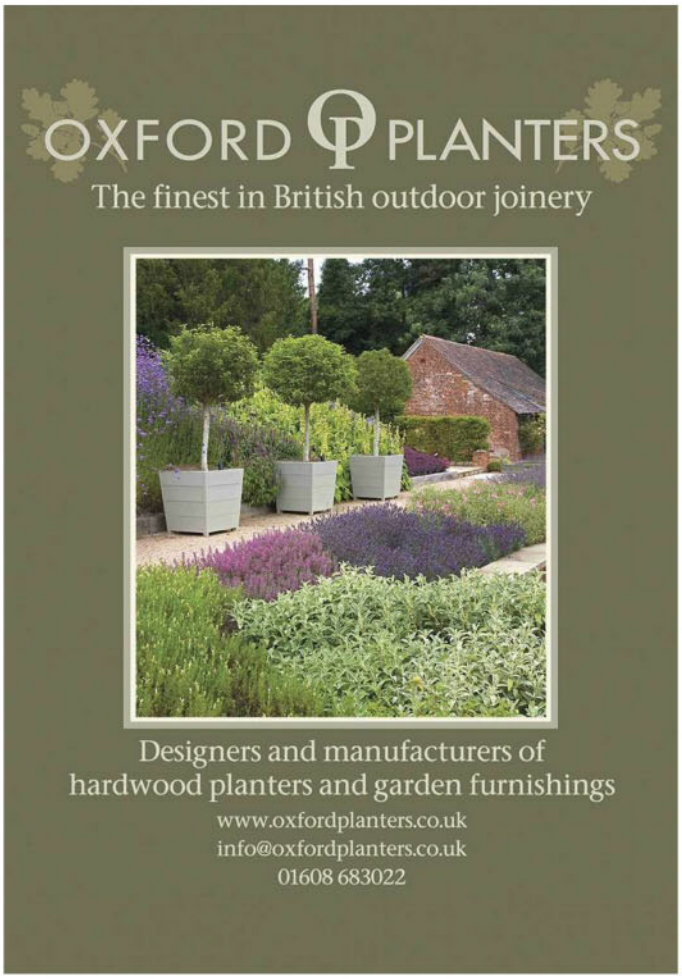
A book outlining the vision and success of Maggie's Cancer Caring Centres, both buildings and gardens.

101 Organic GARDENING HACKS
Shawna Coronado

101 ORGANIC GARDENING HACKS

by Shawna Coronado
Cool Springs Press, £12.99
ISBN 978-1591866626

Tips and tricks for an eco-friendly garden, including how to upcycle and how to make organic soil.



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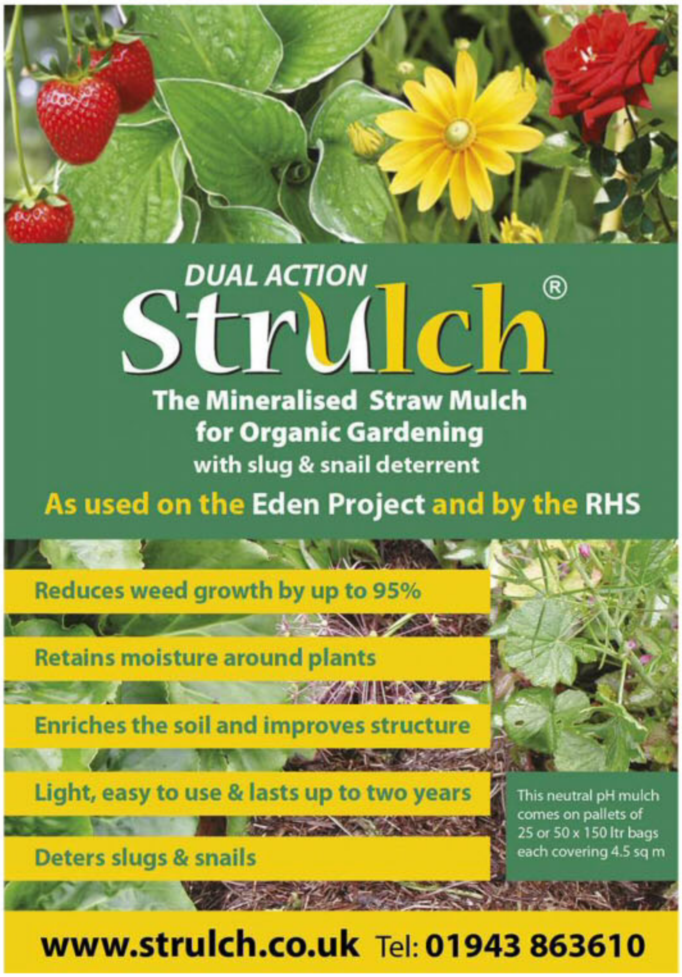

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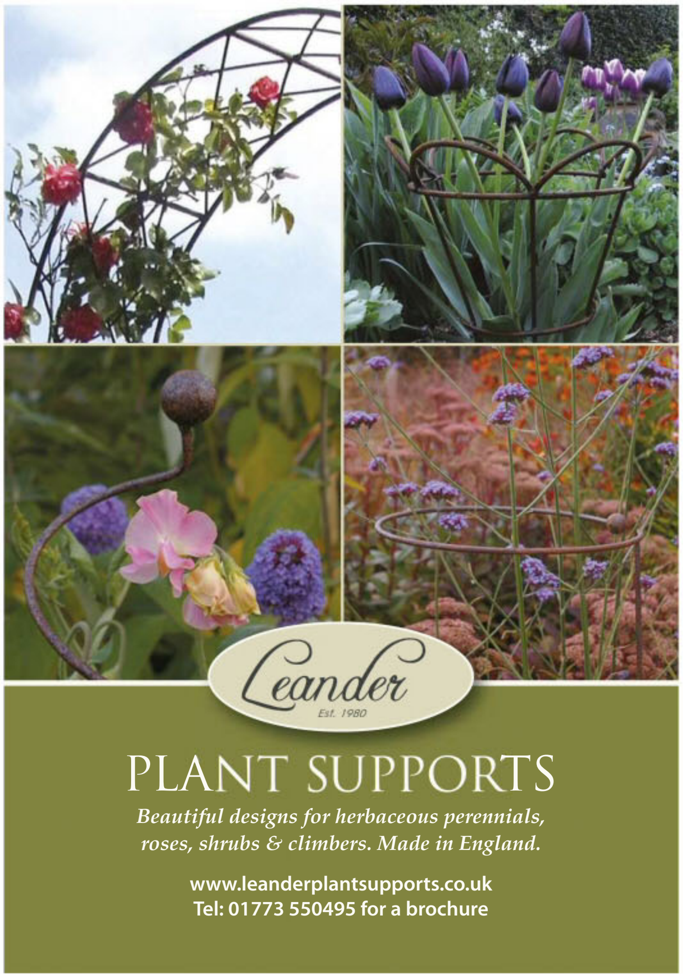

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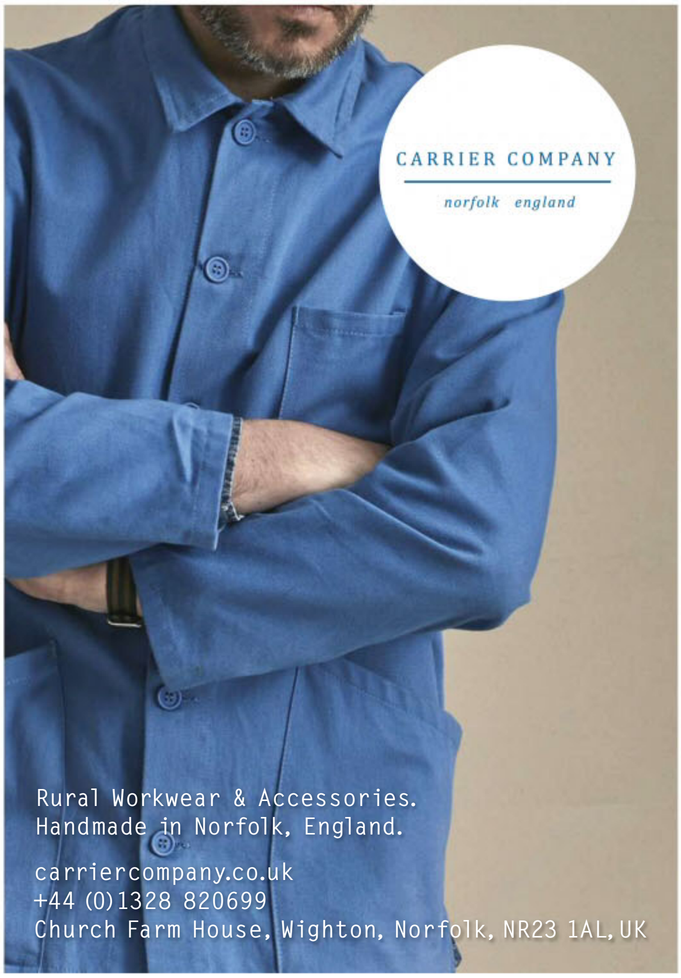

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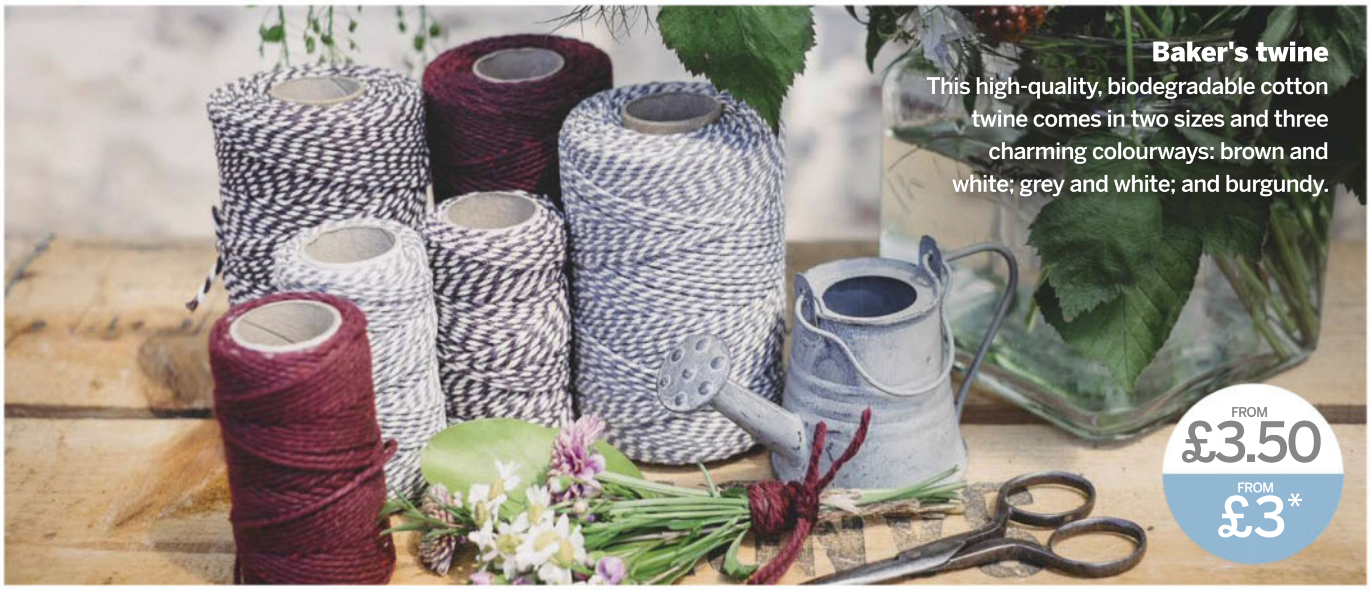

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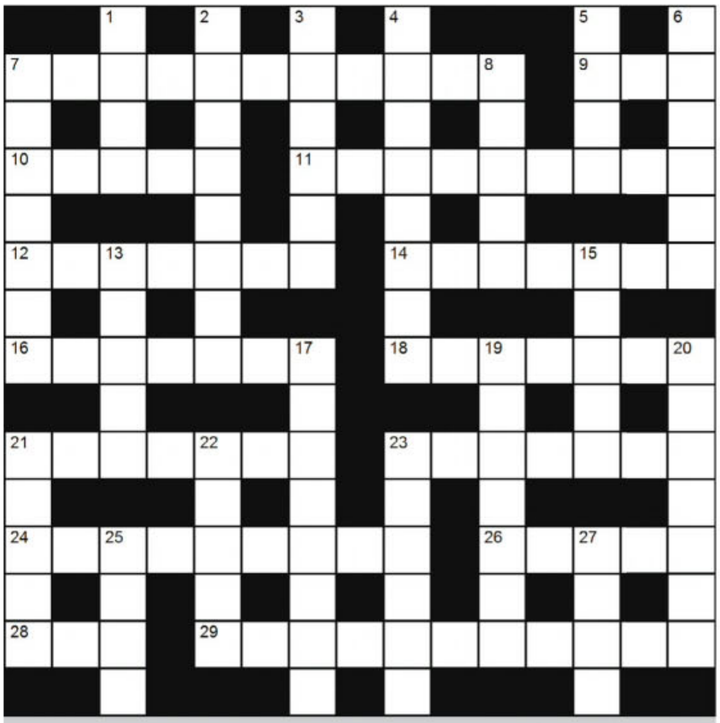

ACROSS

7 *Cordyline australis*'s common name – *Brassica* date tree? (7,4)
9 Bitter-scented shrub starts to rot under earth (3)
10 See 5 down
11 Are they trained to come across with the fruit? (9)
12 An early double snowdrop for a tragic Shakespearean lady (7)
14 Group of fruit trees provides alternative beet (7)
16 Twists like honeysuckle 'April' perhaps, between the extremes of stems (7)
18 Maple's winged fruits (7)
21 Marks of pollen-receiving parts of flowers? (7)
23 What the 'Middlemist's Red' camellia is in danger of becoming (7)
24 State of being unable to produce flowers indicates a lack of vision? (9)
26 Academy Award for a red-flowering gladiolus! (5)
28 Regard a seed-bud on a tuber (3)
29 Genus of African violet – possibly an Asian tulip? (11)

DOWN

1 *Iris sibirica* with violet flowers… consists of ring and bar (4)
2 An ornamental grass genus (formerly *Stipa*) revealed in overturned annual, less anther (8)
3 Catmint genus affected by ant pee! (6)
4 Catchfly plants of *Silene* or *Lychnis* genus (8)
5/10 They mark the annual growth of elders, for example! (4,5)
6 Untangled eg pot-bound roots – ribbed? (6)
7 Single-stemmed fruit trees – wow, Monty's! (7)
8 Possibly claim type of acid from eg apple juice (5)
13 In Hythe I discover a yarrow cultivar with salmon-pink flowers (5)
15 Protective item of clothing – professional briefly gets into one (5)
17 A perennial grass genus – see arils distorted (8)
19 Senior hospital nurse with a pink-flowering sedum (7)
20 Genus of bristle grasses – twisted parasite lacking head (7)
21 Seedsman, initially, competent to get an iris with inky-purple flowers (5)
22 A yellow *Calceolaria* with a golden touch! (5)
23 Genus of plants in banana family in immense terrarium (6)
25 Holly found in Brazil expedition (4)
27 Bamboo stem starts to curl under leaf mulch (4)

SOLUTIONS TO THIS MONTH'S CROSSWORD WILL BE PRINTED NEXT MONTH

FEBRUARY'S SOLUTION

ACROSS 8 Lactuca **10** Dierama **11** Britannia **12** Coral **13** Bobby **14** Petal **15/22** New Guinea **16** Spruces **19** Muscari **21** Veg **23** Lyric **25** Bears **26** Onion **27** Tanacetum **29** Erewhon **30** Rapture.

DOWN 1 Club **2** Sugary **3** Catnip **4** Adiantum **5** Aesculus **6** Barren **7** Paulownias **9** Climber **13** Bush violet **17** Calanthe **18** Serotina **20** Acanthus **24** Cynara **25** Bacopa **28** Mien.

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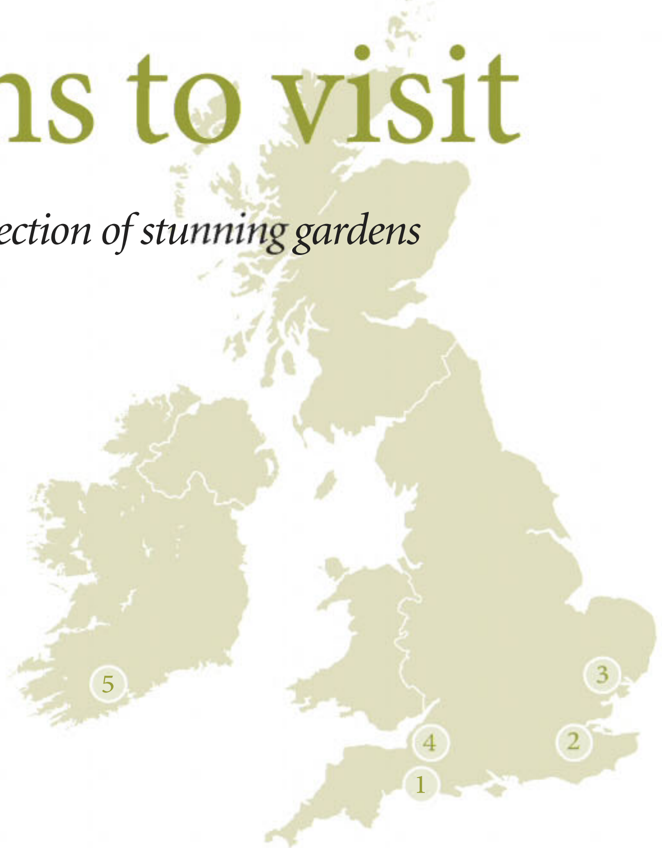

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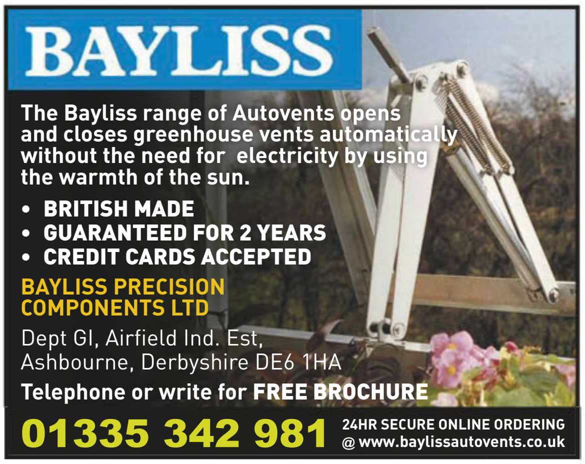

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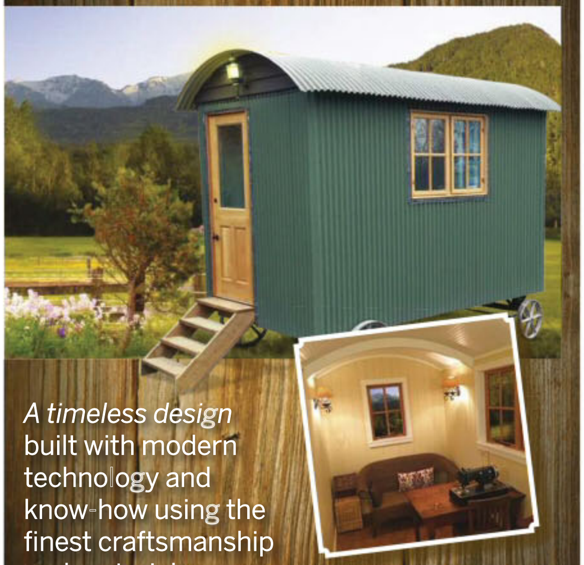

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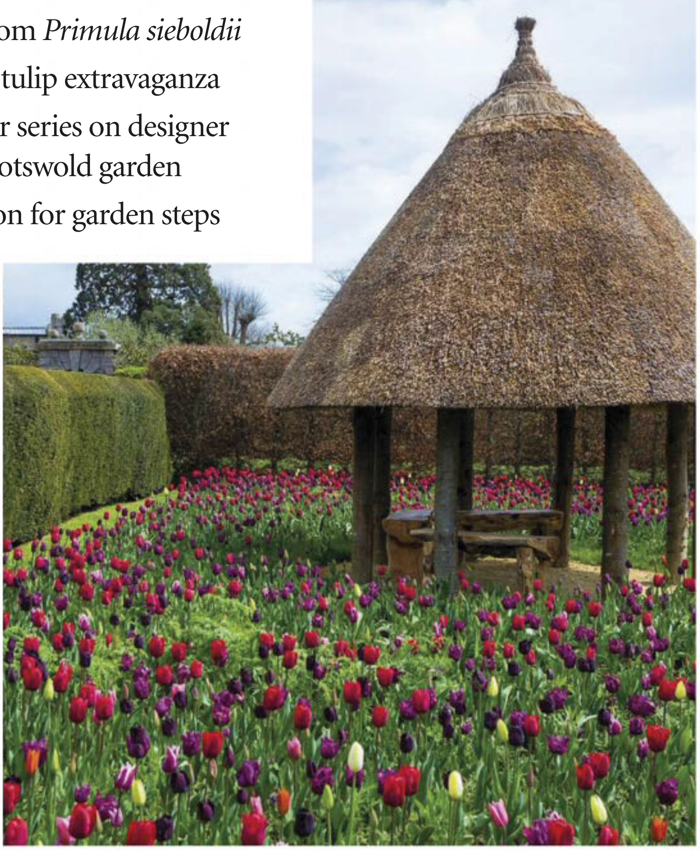

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Passing through nature

Frank reflects on the life of his friend, the plant hunter and owner of Cally Gardens Michael Wickenden, who died last year on a plant-hunting trip

WORDS FRANK RONAN ILLUSTRATION CELIA HART

You would think that being a gardener would immunise you to the sting of death. Not so because, in nearly every case, a plant is replaceable; the death no more than a spur to a better attempt. It does nothing to prepare you for the loss of the irreplaceable. By that I mean a person, and the person I am thinking of was not merely irreplaceable in my small emotional world, but in the great world of plants, where there is no one to grow into the gap he has left.

Nearly half a year ago the news reached us of the death of a friend who was, in many respects, the last of a species. Since then there have been obituaries and tributes from all over the horticultural world, but nothing yet has quite made it sink in that Michael Wickenden is no more. He was one of those unageing, vital creatures who we thought would still be running circles round us when we were all stilled in decrepitude. He was a coiled spring that it should have taken more than a human lifespan to unwind.

There was no quarter given for illness or weakness and no terrain too difficult to cross, and definitely no turning back

He was a plant hunter. I never went on an expedition with him, but a mutual friend who did came back bruised and battered and slightly traumatised. There was no quarter given for illness or weakness and no terrain too difficult to cross, and definitely no turning back. I don't know the exact details of how he died in Burma, but it is not hard to imagine that it might have been due in part to stubbornness. Perhaps it couldn't have been helped, but you couldn't imagine Michael cutting short an expedition at the first sign of infirmity.

His trips were epic, and he invested a huge amount of himself in them. I only knew them from the comfortable end; when he would keep you up until 4am with wide-eyed tales and getting down of maps and books and making you mad with longing to see the Mountains of the Moon, or be chased by bears down the dry beds of Kamchatka rivers, or live among the gypsies in the Chilean Andes. And then you would have a bare three hours sleep before you heard him clattering downstairs looking for breakfast, after which he would reorganise your borders and your tool shed. He was quite a guest, if you could stand the pace.

He didn't drive, but it never stopped him going anywhere. I would take him to Hay-on-Wye and drop him off among the bookshops for the day (claiming work to be done, but actually just needing a nap), and then pick him up in the afternoon with a hoard of books. He had astonishing books, in quality and quantity, and had read them all. He was an autodidact of the first order, which is partly why his knowledge was so broad and deep; why his skill as a propagator was so enviable: his schoolmaster was a tyrant.

But the rarest of his qualities are slightly harder to define. It was something that went with his face, which reminded you of a drawing of a twelfth century saint. He was a bit of a hermit, a bit not of this world. The standby light on your computer would set him off on a rant about how much electricity was being wasted by all the standby lights across the world. He could say these things because he himself was incorruptible, as demonstrated by his stand against Plant Breeders' Rights. Principle came before money, every time.

It is possible that Cally, his nursery, will continue in some form; that someone will try to make something of his legacy, but I don't envy them. His eye was more than extraordinary: it was unique as far as I know, certainly in conjunction with his terrifying energy. It is possible that there is someone out there who knew him and was inspired to be like him, but he was of a kind born not made, and now lost. ◻

Frank Ronan is a novelist who gardens in both the UK and USA.

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